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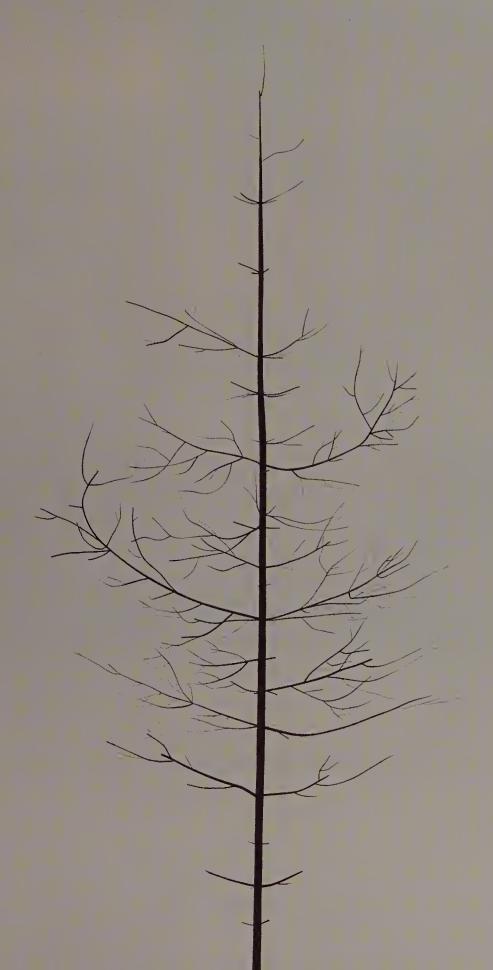


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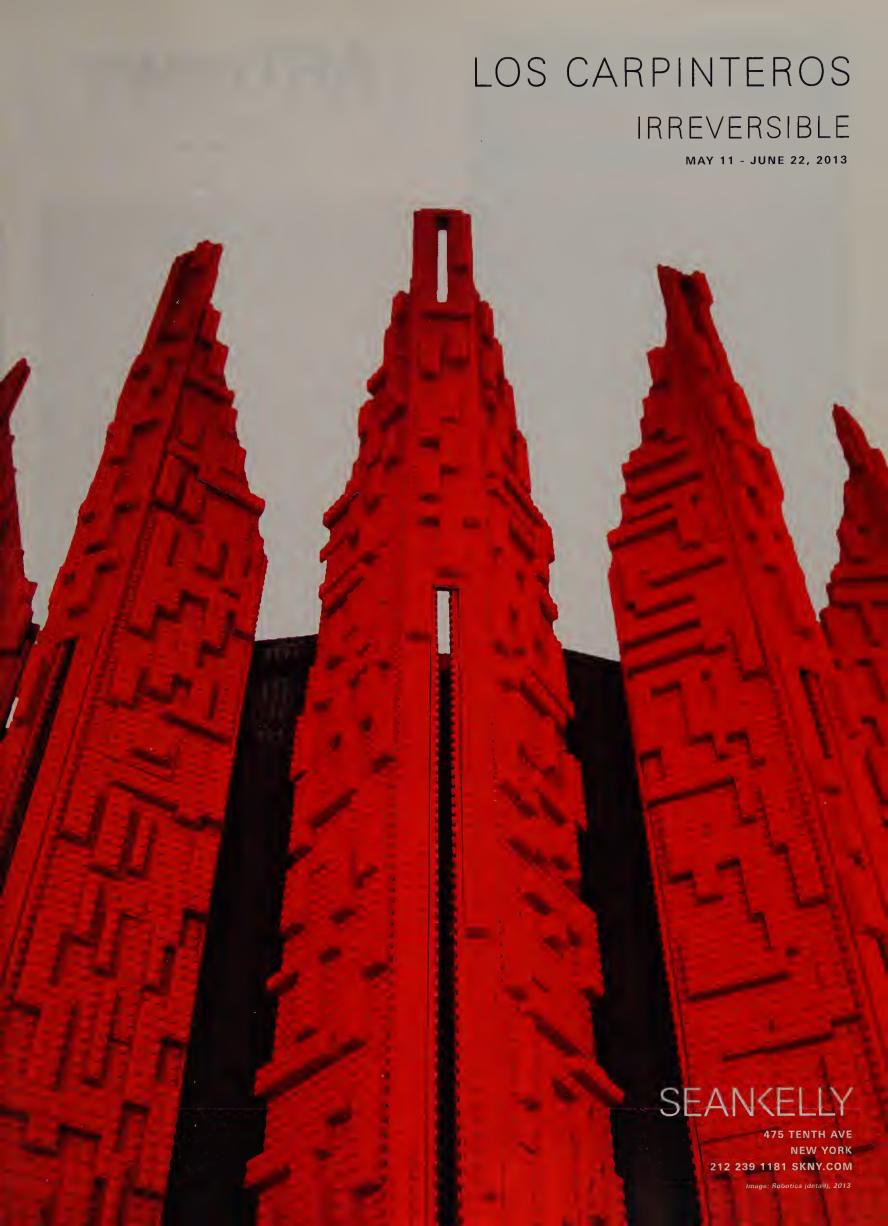
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William Attaway, b.1964
Legend - Heaven and Earth, 106 x 130, Mixed Media, Framed: 108 x 132, Signed, I.r., Attaway



Born in New York to artist parents (and Grandparents – his Grandfather designed the interiors of Radio City Music Hall), Attaway took after them, and was always an artist himself. They were a black and white family and in the early 60's with all the assassinations, it could be a scary time for bi-racial families, so Attaway's family moved to Barbados, where they lived "the simple life" until he was 13. Attaway always loved to draw, and spent many of his days watching men make pottery in kilns built right into the side of Barbados' Chalky Mountain. This was mainly to escape the wrath of a hard core Grandma, but his love of clay was discovered during those long afternoons of observation. Since 1979 William Attaway has been working with ceramics, painting and sculpture on a scale few have attempted. Over the past two decades he has continued to reinvent himself, pushing the boundaries of skill and style.

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## ARTTALK

### **Collective Consciousness**

Democratic and even bohemian in their practice, the five anonymous members of the Brooklyn-based artist collective Bruce High Quality Foundation insist that they make "art by committee," free of any internal hierarchy. Their 2012 Brucennial, a parody of institutional biennials, featured hundreds of works hung salon-style in a cramped space on Bleecker Street, with paintings by

Jean-Michel Basquiat and photographs by Cindy Sherman interspersed between sketches by their buddies from Cooper Union, where the Bruces attended art school. But the all-male group—created to preserve the legacy of the fictional "social sculptor" Bruce High Quality after he perished in the 9/11 attacks—has also worked with a number of artworld institutions, participating in the Whitney Biennial and showing at New York Modernist landmark the Lever House. And on June 28, the Bruce's first solo museum exhibition will open at the Brooklyn Museum.

Subtitled "Ode to Joy, 2001–2013" and billed as a retrospective, the show is slated to include what the guys cheekily describe as "less than 17,000 works . . . some very recent works and some works that aren't finished yet and may never be." (The Bruces would only be interviewed over e-mail, and





The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Thank You New York*, 2009 (top), and *Raft of the Medusa*, 2004.

they responded as a group.)
Curator **Eugenie Tsai** cites
museum director **Arnold Lehman**'s interest in "the
Brooklyn connection and the
boys' irreverent attitude" as
the impetus for the show, and

notes that it will not follow a linear narrative or be organized chronologically. The Bruces agree, adding that "it may not even be organized."

In non-Bruce terms, "Ode to Joy" will actually feature

around 50 objects, though many pieces have several components. Themes, the artists state, encompass "American exceptionalism, financial chicanery, love, misgivings, collectivism, cannibalism, crowds, mistaken identities, and education," and one new work consists of "re-creations of every Greek or Roman object in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Made in Play-Doh." Also on view will be excerpts from their "History Paintings" series, which restages scenes from iconic art-historical works; a video program; a slew of photographs documenting their actions throughout the city; and even the skiff they used to chase **Robert Smithson**'s posthumously realized floating island in waterways around Manhattan in 2005.

"BHQF are not institutional animals, yet they are very much embraced by the art world," explains Tsai. "They are simultaneously insiders and outsiders, which is quite an unusual position to be in." When asked whether they felt that they had to compromise at all, adjusting their work to suit the nature of an institution like the Brooklyn Museum, the Bruces replied, "Yes, we have had to compromise in order to do the exhibition. For instance, we wanted to use the entire museum."

-Emily Nathan

## ARTTALK

## That's the Spirit

Georgia O'Keeffe began a pattern of extended stays in New Mexico in the summer of 1929, when she arrived with painter Rebecca Strand (wife of Paul Strand) and took up residence in a Taos studio provided by arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan. "When you take a look at the paintings she did in those first five months, you find about two dozen—and more than half are totally new subjects altogether," says Carolyn Kastner, associate curator at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe and co-organizer of the touring show "Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico: Architecture, Katsinam, and the Land." The exhibition is on display at the museum through September 8 and then travels to the Heard Museum in Phoenix.

Kastner notes that O'Keeffe was "amazed by the landscape, but there is also a really strong cultural fascination that she expresses immediately." In her first week in New Mexico, the artist bought a car, learned to drive, and went to Pueblo Indian dances. She became enchanted with crosses, adobe buildings, and bones, which would later appear in numerous paintings. "What's clear is that she's on fire with all this new cultural and visual stimulation," Kastner adds.

Among the most startling works in the show are paintings of *katsina tithu*, or kachina dolls, brightly colored wooden representations of Pueblo and Hopi spirits used in ceremonies and rituals. O'Keeffe made 16 such depictions between 1931 and 1942, which range in height from about 10 to 24 inches and can convey monumental



gravity or hapless comedy. The last picture in the series is of a mournful kokopelli (fertility doll), painted in New York and looking as if it's caught in a snowstorm. Although they remain a lesser-known aspect of her prolific career, O'Keeffe's kachinas can be compared to her paintings of dark canyons in what she called the Black Place. "She begins in a realist technique and finishes almost always in abstraction," says Kastner.

Other surprising subjects include horseshoes, feathers, and ceramic chickens. The origin of this last theme was discovered by Kastner and the exhibition's other organizer, former O'Keeffe Museum curator Barbara Buhler Lynes. "We thought they might have been some kind of Hispanic artifact," Kastner says. "But it turns out they're porcelain roosters from Florence that Mabel Dodge Luhan brought with her from Italy and installed on top of the adobe house that she built. They're still there, right on the roofline." —Ann Landi



Blue-Headed Indian Doll, 1935.

# KOLLER



VINCENT VAN GOGH. Pont de Clichy. 1887. Oil on canvas. 55x46 cm.

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## ARTTALK

#### The House That Judd Built

Now that it's finally set to reopen this month, the punctiliously renovated home and studio of **Donald Judd** at 101 Spring Street in SoHo constitutes a demonstration of time stood still. The renovation represents the Minimalist artist, critic, theorist, designer, and collector's final installation of his art collection, including his own art and furniture. Everything is in its proper place.

Judd purchased the 1870 building, with its huge windows and open floor plan, in 1968 for under \$70,000 and lived there until his death in 1994. Restoration of the fivestory cast-iron structure has been overseen by Judd's son, Flavin Judd, and fellow Judd Foundation board member Rob Beyer. The firm Architecture Research Office led the consulting team. Now, visitors can assess Judd's legacy in terms of his own art and design, the art of his time, and the house's style and setting in the midst of an ever-gentrifying SoHo.

Judd believed in permanent installations, and to that end he commissioned some pieces, collected others, and installed his own works. Carl Andre's stack of bricks Manifest Destiny (1986) sits near a window on the house's ground floor. On the second floor, with its Judddesigned kitchen and bathroom, are Ad Reinhardt's Red Painting (1952) and a David Novros fresco that Judd commissioned in 1970. Judd's formal studio is on the third floor along with a library, a cube by Larry Bell, and a table and chairs by Alvar Aalto. The fourth floor has Frank Stella's painting Concentric Circles (1967) and furniture by Judd







Donald Judd's newly restored house at 101 Spring Street.

TOP TO BOTTOM The fourth floor, with furniture designed by Judd
and a Frank Stella painting. Artwork by Dan Flavin, Lucas
Samaras, and John Chamberlain in the fifth-floor bedroom.

Judd on the first floor in the 1970s.

and **Gerrit Rietveld** as well as an Etruscan candelabra and sconces. The fifth floor contains the sleeping areas and a large **Dan Flavin** fluorescent piece.

The building is "basically a house museum," Flavin Judd says. "We put everything back where it was. We did as little as possible, choosing to stick with Judd's last arrangement. By the '80s, once he figured it all out, it was permanent. Everything else went to Texas"—that is, to Marfa, where Judd owned 15 properties.

Growing up in such exacting quarters was not all that restrictive, according to Flavin, but "we knew you don't walk through the art. The rules were the rules." On occasion, he says, his father might switch one work of art from his collection for another, though "things stayed basically the same." The biggest changes came when Judd would tweak the interior, as he did on the fourth story by designing a wooden ceiling that mirrored the floor.

Judd's daughter, filmmaker and artist Rainer Judd, is currently heading up an oral-history project for the Judd Foundation (where she is copresident with Flavin), enabling her to understand her relationship with her father in a different way. She began working on the project in 2006. "There's something very rewarding about having resources and then spending time with the work of somebody you loved and who passed away early, at 65," she says. "When you're living with someone in life, you don't really look at the work."

-Barbara A. MacAdam





Milton Avery, Lady Seated in a Chair (detail), pastel on paper, 1935. Estimate \$20,000 to \$30,000.

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#### Where the Wild Things Art

Five decades have passed since readers first encountered Max, the wolf-suited boy who sailed away, started a wild rumpus with his beastly buddies, and made it back home in time for dinner. As the beloved hero of Where the Wild Things Are,

been neglected in America, even though they were widely collected overseas," says Schiller, who remained close with Sendak until his death last year at the age of 83. "Maurice appreciated not only the mechanisms that were created but also the

120 works in the show is Sendak's original 1985 cover design for the *Horn Book Magazine*. It depicts Sendak as a "wild thing," peeking over the shoulder of a sketching Caldecott and trying to mimic his technique.

The exhibition provides

notes Schiller. "He never accepted shortcuts."

"Many of his books had their origins in projects or discarded sketches going back 10 or 20 years," adds children's book historian **Leonard S. Marcus**, who edited the accompanying



In Celebration of Maurice Sendak, 1990, an illustration of Sendak's most celebrated characters, originally created for a promotional poster.

Max joins the many other creations of children's book artist **Maurice Sendak** in an exhibition that opens June 11 at the Society of Illustrators in New York.

Rare-book dealer **Justin G. Schiller**, who cocurated the show with **Dennis M.V. David**, met Sendak in 1967, and the two quickly bonded over their shared interest in children's books, particularly the pop-up innovations of German illustrator **Lothar Meggendorfer**. "In those days, children's books had

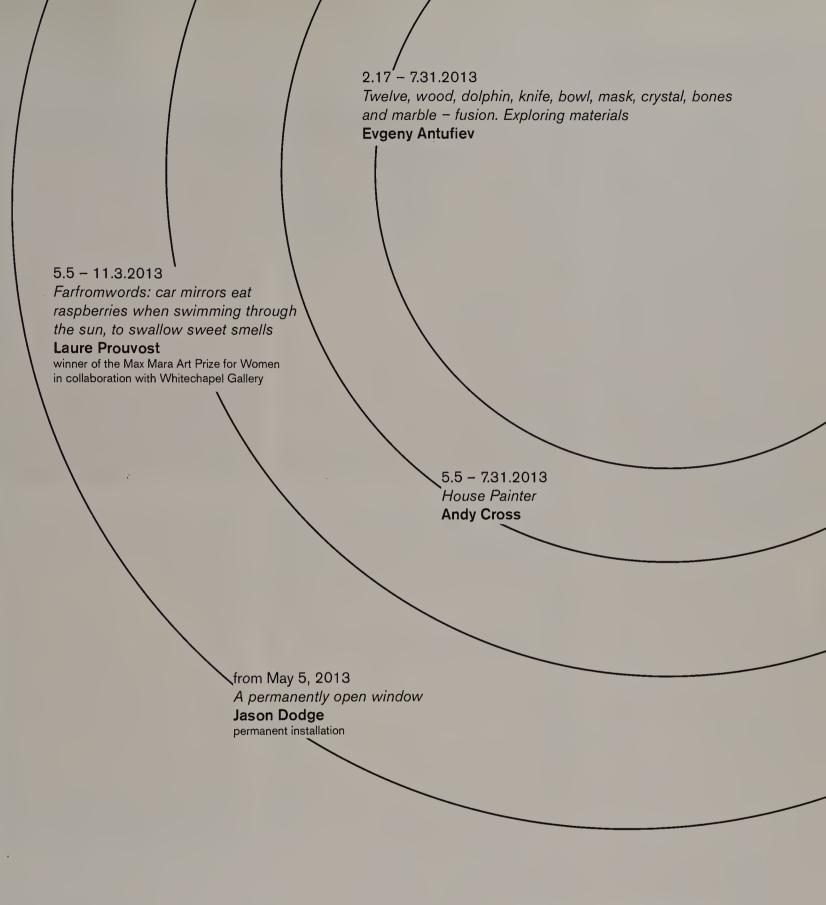
quality of the art."

The Brooklyn-born Sendak, who bypassed college for a job as a window dresser at F.A.O. Schwarz, credited 19th-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott as a primary influence on his art, along with Walt Disney films and poet William Blake. "Maurice studied the picture books of Caldecott, who had this potent way of creating movement, motion, and character in pictures," Schiller says. Among the approximately

insights into Sendak's own painstaking process through preparatory studies, etchings, and sketches, including several unused drawings for The Juniper Tree: And Other Tales from Grimm, a two-volume set published in 1973. "When you go back and look at the published book, you realize that Maurice chose to illustrate another episode from the same story that does work better and is more memorable, but the preparatory image is in itself marvelous and incredibly detailed,"

catalogue, Maurice Sendak: A Celebration of the Artist and His Work (Abrams). "These were stories that he was living with for a very long time." Marcus singles out the importance of Sendak's distinctively deliberate line in his drawings. "The theme of much of his work is the effort of children to maintain themselves in a largely hostile world, and you see that in the line that defines them," he says. "They're small but they're solid."

-Stephanie Murg



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## ARTTALK

#### Cross Current

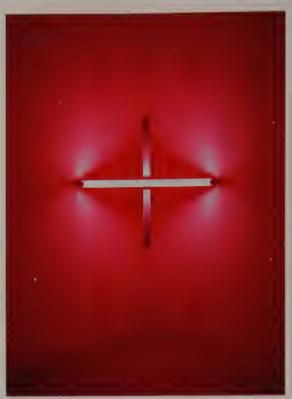
In the summer of 1962, **Dan Flavin** was 29 years old and working as a guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In a journal entry dated August 9 of that year, Flavin recalled a visceral encounter he had there with the Byzantine painting *Christ in Glory.* "There was a physical feeling in the panel," he wrote. "This icon had that magical presiding presence which I have tried to realize in my own icons."

"Byzantine Things in the World," an exhibition at the Menil Collection in Houston (through August 18), presents works by Flavin and other modern and contemporary artists—including Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Alberto Giacometti, and Mark Rothko-side by side with Byzantine objects from the museum's permanent collection. The show's curator, Glenn Peers, hopes that this arrangement will help isolate the distinctive, odd, and, yes, magical aspects of Byzantine art.

Pieces are grouped together by subjects such as "Cross," "Face," "Body Orientations," and "Erotics" so that museumgoers can compare and contrast 20th-century artists' treatments of these themes with those of the Byzantines. The dark cruciform shape embedded in Ad Reinhardt's Abstract Painting (1954-60) and the Minimalist cross created by the intersection of a pink flourescent tube and metal fixture in Flavin's untitled [to Barbara Wool], 1970, are, for example, a far cry from the blunt liturgical crosses of Byzantine Christianity.

For Peers, the category titled "Mystery of Vision"









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT An icon of Saint Gregory, late 14th or early 15th century; Dan Flavin's *untitled* [to Barbara Wool], 1970; Yves Klein's *Untitled* (Monogold), ca. 1960; a gold reliquary box, ca. 1500, possibly from Macedonia.

presents some of the most striking cultural comparisons. This section focuses on the cognitive and sociological dissimilarities between contemporary and Byzantine cultures. "They didn't see how we do," Peers says. "They had much different expectations of the world."

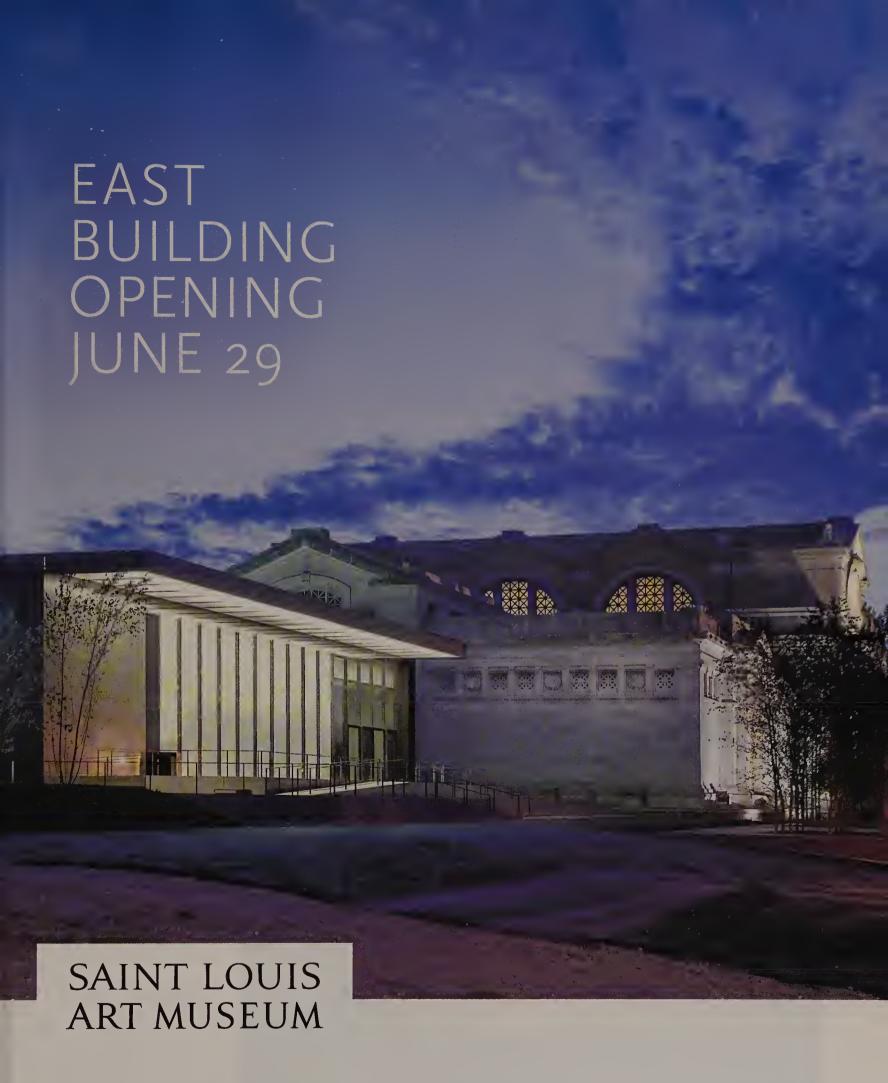
These differences are evident in the Byzantines' use of gold, a material they believed

to be mysterious and, in some respects, living. Viewers can see this in a small gold reliquary box (ca. 1500) that's no larger than a fist. In the show, the box sits on the floor so that it is lit unevenly, revealing some of the oddness and instability of the medium. It's placed near **Robert Rauschenberg**'s painted-

**Rauschenberg**'s paintedgold *Crucifixion and Reflection* (ca. 1950) and **Yves Klein**'s gold-leaf *Untitled* (Monogold), ca. 1960, demonstrating how more-recent artists regarded the material with somewhat less reverence.

"There is a kind of peculiar animism unique to the Byzantine world," Peers explains. "Through this exhibition, I want to give these objects back some of their strangeness."

-Stephanie Strasnick



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## ARTTALK

## Speaking Volumes

"Art in Public Places/What Did I Do?/Interventions and Provocations/On This Site." Nina Katchadourian produced this bit of freeform poetry by stacking the spines of four carefully chosen books in the research library at the Akron Art Museum, in Ohio. For 20 years, the Brooklynbased conceptual artist has been creating these kinds of small, transformative dialogues within book collections, and now photographs of her arrangements have been brought together in Sorted Books, published by Chronicle.

"I often work from very familiar situations that are found in our vernacular," Katchadourian said over the phone from Austin, Texas, where she'd been invited to sort books in a collector couple's home. "Books are like that. We think of them in terms of their content, but this is a sculptural project in that I'm working with the



Nina Katchadourian, from the series "Special Collections Revisited," 1996/2008.

physical qualities of each book and what arranging those books does to reflect the meaning of the title."

At the Delaware Art Museum, where she delved into the institution's historic American book collection, Katchadourian was struck by 19th-century titles that

romanticized the Native
Americans at a time when
they were being displaced.
Her discovery resulted in a
configuration that reads:
"Indian History for Young
Folks/Our Village/Your National Parks." Then there's
the two-book punch of "What
is Art?/Close Observation."

"A lot happens just by moving these things around to show what's been there the whole time," the artist said.

Katchadourian has been doing these book-sorting interventions since 1993, when, as a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, she and some fellow students were invited by a friend's parents to create art in their home. She was drawn to the family's bookshelves, executing an idea she'd once had when roaming a library and imagining the trails of titles forming sentences.

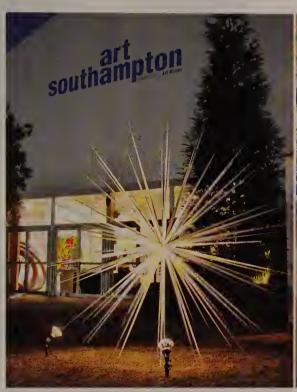
A playful but cutting voice always comes through that makes each stack her own, even if the words are borrowed. And the results end up capturing something of the identity of the collections, as well as the people who amassed them. "It's a portraiture project, and everybody's book collections are quite revealing," Katchadourian said. "There's a lot you can imagine about someone that shows itself between the spines."

-Allison C. Meier



From the series "Akron Stacks," 2001.

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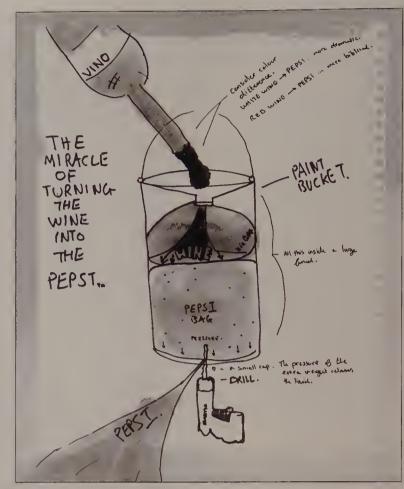
#### **Do It Again**

"Tear out this page while listening attentively . . . crumple the page into a small ball," read Christian Marclay's directions for a do-it-yourself artwork. "Save the ball(s)/ discard the book." Marclay's Instruction (1995–96) is one of 250 written "art scores" included in a new book documenting Hans Ulrich Obrist's ongoing "do it" exhibition project. Featuring contributions by the likes of Amalia Pica, Cory Arcangel, Ryan Trecartin, Yoko Ono, and Lawrence Weiner, do it: the compendium is intended not only as a record of this historic project—which Obrist conceived with artists Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier in 1993 but as an iteration of the exhibition itself, with 80 new scores. D.A.P. and Independent Curators International published the book to coincide with the 20th anniversary of "do it."

"The exhibitions we remember are the ones that

invent new rules of the game," Obrist told ARTnews, "and when we came up with 'do it' we had that in mind. Every 'do it' work is very much a collaboration between the artist who writes the instruction and the artist who actually executes it, and then the visitor who interacts with it." In conjunction with the book launch, "do it" will have a slew of participatory events worldwide throughout the year—including the very first outdoor "do it" at New York's Socrates Sculpture Park (through July 7)—and a comprehensive show at the Manchester Art Gallery in England, which features the inaugural edition of DO iT TV, will go up in July.

Of course, the flexibility of the contributions varies wildly, ranging from **Sol Le-Witt**'s meticulous graphic specifications, to **Alexandre Singh**'s freewheeling diagram for "turning the wine into the Pepsi," to Ono's poetically abstract *Wish Piece* (1996), in which she instructs us to make wishes until the



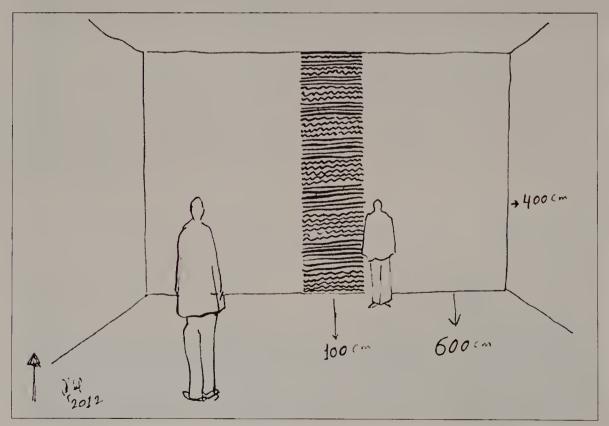
Alexandre Singh's plan for turning wine into Pepsi, 2012.

branches of a "Wish Tree" are covered in them.

"'Do it' obviously evokes the playful nature of something like Neo-Fluxus or NeoDada," Obrist says. "But there is also a strong connection to activism. The instructions from the last couple of years have a kind of parallel energy to Occupy Wall Street." While some works in the volume are overtly political—Ai Weiwei's irreverent CCTV Spray (2012) guides readers in making a spray-can device that can block out surveillance cameras — others more subtly reference the complex nature of cultural exchange in a rapidly globalizing world. Felix Gonzalez-Torres's Untitled (1994), for example, demands that we gather 180 pounds of local candy and drop them in a corner.

"In the '90s, there was a very strong spirit of DIY,"
Obrist says, "and that spirit seems to be recurrent. 'Do it' is not always relevant, but it pops up when it needs to.
And every iteration is like a brand new 'do it' generation."

—Emily Nathan



Hassan Sharif's design for a draw-it-yourself wall work, 2012.



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#### ARTnews Retrospective

#### **100 Years Ago**

The Board of U.S. General Appraisers, concurring with Judge Waite recently decided that a bronze mask of Balzac executed by Rodin was, for tariff purposes merely a "manufacture of metal" and dutiable at 45%. This decision is the result of an appeal made several months ago by Mr. Eugene Meyer, Jr., who ordered the impression from Rodin last year, with the idea that it would be dutiable as a modern sculpture at 15% ad valorem. — "Rodin Bronze Not Art (?)," June 21, 1913

#### 75 Years Ago

Following its successful survey of the horse in painting and sculpture, the Fogg Museum now presents him at closer range, with "The Horse in Prints." To compensate for their lesser prestige the prints have at least this advantage: in these forty-five examples we meet more artists and can look at more horses.

... The ways of looking at this show are many and tempting. What positions of the horse, for instance, have appealed most to these admirers and keen observers? What can we, as laymen or horsemen, remember and observe? Of course they drew him just standing, but oddly enough they often drew him from behind. So he appears in Dürer's Great White Horse or Géricault's Flemish Horse-shoer.

—"Horses in a Second Show

of Black & White Work," June 4, 1938

**50 Years Ago** 

Man Ray [Cordier & Ekstrom] was given a sizable retrospective at Princeton University, and then here, and his own presence at the vernissage stirred up considerable publicity. For Man Ray, like many of his generation, is an outspoken and pithy commentator on the state of art yesterday and today, and generally the superiority of the good old times. If his remarks to the press have more stylish cut than his paintings, he is still much to be honored for the role he played with Picabia, Arp and others in the founding of international Dada around 1915.

—"Reviews and Previews," June 1963

#### 25 Years Ago

[Joan] Mitchell's work, like her life, is filled with ironies. Viewers totally unaware of a particular loss experienced by the artist may feel exhilaration in a work actually painted during a time of sadness or pain. The communication between artist and audience is not always a direct, unbroken line. Yet it is Mitchell's sureness of stroke and her luminous color sensibility that repeatedly affirm her commitment to the act of painting. The physical intensity of this experience, another obvious characteristic of her art, links her, naturally, to the first-generation Abstract Expressionists. —"Dark Victories,"

by Harry Gaugh, June 1988





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### 'A Typical Whodunit'

Despite new information and tactics ranging from wiretaps to billboards, authorities still haven't discovered the artworks stolen from the Gardner-but they keep trying

BY MILTON ESTEROW

wenty-three years after the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston was robbed of works now valued at between \$500 million to \$600 million—the largest art theft in history—there have been more than 10,000 tips from many countries.

Despite the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Attorney for Massachusetts, the

Boston police, the Gardner, and some of the world's top private investigators, none of the authorities know for sure where the works are, and no arrests had been made as ARTnews went to press.

These efforts include a \$5 million reward for information leading to the recovery of the works, a coded message the museum sent to an anonymous tipster through the financial pages of the Boston Globe, and a computerized database containing about 30,000 bits of information created by Anthony Amore, the Gardner's director of security.

"There is no part of the

Rembrandt's The Storm on the Sea of Galilee, 1633, one of the 13 works whose whereabouts remain unknown.

globe that we haven't scoured following up on credible leads," Geoffrey J. theft, said recently.

A caller suggested that one of the paintings, a Vermeer, was in a mobile home moving around the country. One man said that the stolen art was somewhere in South America. A woman insisted she had seen one painting in

Kelly, the FBI's lead investigator in the

Japan. Another man showed the FBI how to use divining rods to locate the works in Boston. A prison inmate said that some of the paintings were shipped to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Genoa, Italy, and then to a dealer in France.

Among those questioned by the FBI are American drug lords, ex-museum guards, and Japanese underworld figures. An FBI agent flew with colleagues to Paris to discuss with French prosecutors a tip that a discredited French tycoon had bought two of the paintings. The FBI reportedly put an undercover informant in the jail cell of a suspect in the theft. But the suspect didn't cooperate.

TWO THUGS WEARING POLICE UNIforms managed to enter a side entrance of the museum at 1:24 AM on March 18, 1990, after telling a guard, "I think we have a default warrant out for you." Eighty-one minutes later, after they

tied and handcuffed two guards, the thieves escaped with 13 works of art, including two Rembrandts, The Storm on the Sea of Galilee and A Lady and Gentleman in Black (which some scholars say isn't a Rembrandt); Vermeer's The Concert (1658-60); five Degas drawings; a Manet oil; and a few other works. Empty frames still mark the spots where some of the paintings used to hang in the Gardner's Dutch room.

Richard DesLauriers. special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston office, recently announced at a press conference that "the FBI believes with a high degree of confidence that in the years after the theft, the art was transported to Connecticut and the Philadelphia region, and some of the art was taken to Philadelphia. where it was offered for

sale by those responsible for the theft."

DesLauriers added, "With that same confidence, we have identified the thieves, who are members of a criminal organization with a base in the mid-Atlantic states and New England." After the attempted sale, which took place approximately a decade ago, the FBI's knowledge of the art's whereabouts is limited.

DesLauriers told me in a recent telephone interview that "leads have come in as a result of the press conference, and we are actively vetting them as we speak."

Kevin Cullen, a columnist for the *Boston Globe* and coauthor of a book about the legendary Boston crime boss James "Whitey" Bulger, wrote that the announcement "makes sense to me."

"There was always a symbiotic relationship between the Mafia in Boston and Philadelphia," Cullen wrote. One thug, "who used to be the number two man in the Mafia around here, positively gushed over the Philly mob," according to Cullen. "That's because, like the Philly boys," he "loved to shoot people."

Robert K. Wittman, who was with the FBI for 20 years, founded the agency's art crime team in 2005 and headed it until he retired in 2008. He does not agree with Cullen and DesLauriers.

"I was the art crime investigator in Philadelphia and had my pulse on criminal events," he told me. "There was no indication, no intelligence that the Gardner paintings were in Philadelphia. There were wiretaps. We had informants who were in the mob. If the Gardner paintings were in Philadelphia they would have known about it, and we would have known about it."

Wittman, who is now a private artrecovery specialist based in Philadelphia, added, "But I'm not disputing it. It doesn't sound plausible, but that doesn't say it couldn't happen."

Asked about Wittman's comments, DesLauriers said, "He would have retired before our investigation accelerated in 2010. As a result of that he would not have been in a position to know of the current status of the investigation."



Above: The FBI's Richard DesLauriers speaks to the press about the Gardner theft while (from left) museum security chief Anthony Amore, U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz, and Special Agent Geoff Kelly look on. Below: A template for one of the billboards soliciting tips about the works.



Some investigators, including Wittman, believe there's a good chance that Bulger knows something about the theft. Bulger, who was once an FBI informant, was arrested by the FBI in Los Angeles in 2011 after having disappeared about 18 years ago. He is now on trial on murder charges.

I asked DesLauriers about Bulger. He said, "There's no connection between the Gardner theft and Bulger."

DESLAURIERS SAID THAT THE FBI HAS redesigned its website on the theft (FBI.gov/gardner), made video postings on FBI social media sites, and put up billboards featuring the paintings in Philadelphia and Boston.

Kelly, who has been assigned to the case for the last ten years, told me in a telephone interview: "My guess would be that the guys who stole the

paintings were local guys who thought they were going to get a quick score. But they woke up the next morning realizing that they committed the heist of the century.

"This is a typical whodunit. One of the biggest problems in a case like this is trying to figure out who the suspects are. This case is unique because there is no shortage of suspects. It's like the Agatha Christie novel in which everyone confesses to the crime. In this case, a number of people have claimed knowledge or involvement.

"One tipster said one of the paintings was hanging in the Hermitage. We had to send someone there to check it out. We've had multiple reports about the Vermeer and the

Milton Esterow is editor and publisher of ARTnews.

Rembrandt Storm on the Sea of Galilee being offered for sale in antique stores. One person in Florida reported that one of the Rembrandts was being displayed in a showroom at a carpet store. These were all copies or reproductions.

"My predecessor went to Japan. Someone supposedly had one of the paintings on a wall. It was a high-quality copy of one of the paintings. And that's one of the problems we deal with. There are copies out there not meant to deceive, but if someone sees it they think it's one of the Gardner paintings."

Kelly said that some of the tips

come directly to the Gardner while others go to the FBI. "Some people are more comfortable providing tips to the museum rather than to the FBI," he said. "Why? I don't know. We're fine with that as long as someone is calling in."

What about reports that the Irish Republican Army has been involved? Kelly said, "I don't believe it, but I can't dismiss it. We have no information about that. It's a viable theory. The IRA has used art theft as a fund-raising mechanism. Over the years they burglarized a house in England on multiple occasions and returned the paintings for a reward."

Carmen Ortiz, the United States Attorney for Massachusetts, said at a press conference that her office "continues to offer the possibility of immunity from criminal prosecution for information that leads to the return of the paintings.

"And immunity as a potential for someone who may have knowledge,



▲ Johannes Vermeer,

The Concert, 1658–1660.

or has actual knowledge—may have had involvement in the concealment throughout the years of these works of art—would be available to them," she said.

Amore, the Gardner's director of security, said that "the statute of limitations for the commission of the crime was five years. It expired in 1995. The museum worked with Senator Edward Kennedy to change the law. The statute is now 15 years and penalties are more severe."

Tipsters continue to contact Amore. "One man told me that Mrs. Gardner [who died in 1924] had been speaking to him and told him who stole the paintings," he said. "He didn't give names. I try not to let them get that far. One person said that former Vice President Dick Cheney was involved. I

got a letter last week saying Jackie Kennedy was involved. Another said Brad Pitt. A lot of well-meaning people insist that the paintings are hidden in the museum."

Among the stillunanswered questions about the theft: Why did the thieves steal mainly Dutch and French works? Why didn't they go to the third floor and take Titian's Rape of Europa, which Peter Sutton, executive director of the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, and a distinguished scholar, calls "arguably the greatest painting in America"?

As to why the thieves were so at ease that they could

stay in the museum for 81 minutes knowing that no other alarm would be triggered, Amore said, "I can speculate. The FBI estimates that 85 to 90 percent of such thefts include inside information. It's possible the thieves had such information, as seen by the familiarity that they had with the building. However, there's a difference between complicity and inside information. An employee might have carelessly provided some detail about security, without the intent of leading to a theft."

Amore said that tipsters have even accused him of the theft. "They won't take my assurances to the contrary," he said, with a smile. "There's nothing that I haven't heard."

During the theft, the thieves were not unconcerned about the guards.

"Are you comfortable?" one of the thieves asked. "Handcuffs too tight?"

"One of the guards replied that the handcuffs were too tight, so one of the thieves recuffed him," Amore said.



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Top: Paul hits John, Pillow Fight, George V Hotel, Paris, 1964. Archival Pigment Print. Bottom: Andy and Bianca at the Factory, New York, 1977, Archival Pigment Print.

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## Dome Improvement-An Art Museum in Rockaway Beach

MoMA PS1's VW Dome 2 is the latest in a wave of museum outposts that are humble, nimble, and temporary, offering free admission—and much more than art BY ROBIN CEMBALEST

If there was a barrier to getting into one of the edgiest dinners in the New York art world last spring, it wasn't the admission. But it could have been the subway. "This Is Not a Private Party" is the insistent, unironic name of the communal potluck dinner that was held in April at the VW Dome 2, MoMA PS1's newest outpost in Queens.

The white geodesic structure, a smaller version of its older sibling in

Long Island City, popped up Easter weekend at Beach 94th Street in the Rockaways, right across Shorefront Parkway from the beach, or what's left of it. In between is the skeleton of the boardwalk—one of many amenities, including the subway, that have yet to be repaired since superstorm Sandy walloped the peninsula last fall.

The dinner was organized by the Rockaway Rescue Alliance, a group

working to establish a permanent pay-as-you-can Relief Restaurant. They're among the partners Klaus Biesenbach, the MoMA PS1 director who conceived of the Dome (and owns a second home nearby), invited to help program the venue, along with the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance, the Rockaway Beach Surf Club, and the Queens Museum. Through June 30, the Dome is offering performance, dance, yoga, gardening classes, instruction in art and ecology, film screenings, a showcase for suggestions on sustainable design, and more.

With exactly two conventional artworks on view at its inauguration—*The Way Things Go* (1987), the hilarious Fischli/Weiss film of actions and reactions, and *The Future Iz Bigger Than History* (2012), a Terence Koh installation of eggshells in a vitrine—the Dome was conceived less as exhibition space than as form of social practice.

▼ MoMA PS1's VW Dome 2 is in Rockaway Beach through June 30.





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"One goal is literally that it should be in service to the community," Biesenbach commented. "It shouldn't reduce its profile to a pure art space."

Queens Museum director Tom
Finkelpearl came to the Dome's official opening with his team including an art therapist, education director, community organizer, director of partnerships, social-media specialist, and manager of school partnerships, who were there not only to see Patti Smith sing but also to begin plotting programs and outreach.

"People are beginning to understand that art can and should intervene," says Finkelpearl, whose new book is What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation.

Among the programs that Queens Museum staff staged at the Dome were a mobile reading room, a photo booth, and a Drop-In Family Workshop for art making. The team helped participants create cities of their own imagining as they reflected on questions such as "What is a city? What goes on there? How does it work?"

The VW Dome 2 is another example of the ways that, even in a time of austerity, U.S. art museums are continuing to expand beyond their walls. Globally, it's less in the form of ambitious mega-projects like the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (now scheduled for completion in 2017) and more through networks and networking, like the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, whose next focus is Latin America, and the Metropolitan's recent accord with India.

At home, the trend is toward creating spaces that are nimble, inclusive, and temporary or virtual. The Guggenheim BMW Lab, another community center/event space that appeared in New York, Berlin, and Mumbai, recently enhanced its online presence with a virtual "game" designed to spark conversations about privacy and public space. And the Queens Museum, which is opening its newly expanded flagship in Flushing Meadows Park next fall, has an extension of sorts in the Oueens neighborhood of Corona—in the form of Immigrant Movement International, Tania Bruguera's "artist-initiated



sociopolitical movement" that offers legal workshops, language classes, and more. Bruguera's "Arte Útil Lab," recently on view at the Queens Museum, looks at various ways art can address social problems. It travels to the Netherlands this fall in the form of a Museum of Arte Útil that will take over Eindhoven's Van Abbemuseum.

Dome 2 materialized just as Biesenbach was launching the rest of the VW-sponsored project: "EXPO 1: New York," a "festival-as-institution" running all summer. EXPO 1 features several art exhibitions, pieces of an Icelandic glacier (brought to New York by artist Olafur Eliasson in a deepfreezer container), a structure housing a school of "speculations on the future," a MoMA PS1 gallery transformed into a bio-habitat, an experimental roof garden, a commune-like colony in the courtyard where students and teachers can live, and a structure at MoMA to make weather a "participatory experience," among many, many other things.

Last spring the Center for the Future of Museums, a part of the American Alliance of Museums, released TrendsWatch 2013, its second report examining ways that museums do and can respond to transformations in society. One major change is in philanthropy: in an era when the socially conscious millennial audience is moving into position as patrons, the report

A boy looks at Terence Koh's The Future Iz Bigger Than History in MoMA PS1's VW Dome 2.

says, supporters will demand more bang for their fundraising buck. It also urges museums to stay on the cutting edge of technology, pushing their way out of the white-cube sensibility with 3D printing, online learning, smart buildings, interactive displays, and increased engagement in public discussion about themes such as urbanism and ecology.

These new trends present new challenges. The criteria for judging social practice—as art? as activism?—remain elusive, in the art world as well as local communities where some have accused museum arrivals of being gentrifiers or interlopers.

The role of an art venue like the Dome as a transformational social space—whether people come for the art, the Wi-Fi, or the facilities—cannot be quantified, Biesenbach stresses. "Art is an excuse to see people and start talking," he says.

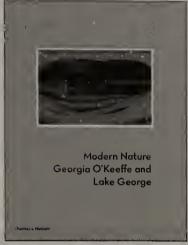
Finkelpearl puts it another way: "We can't deliver all the sand out of the streets," he says. "We need some fun out there. That we can definitely deliver."

Robin Cembalest is executive editor of ARTnews.



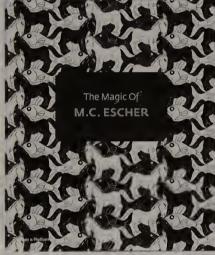
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## Reimagining LACMA Again

An exhibition brings architect
Peter Zumthor's planned
redesign for the museum's
campus to public view

BY SUZANNE MUCHNIC

Angeles County Museum of Art director Michael Govan, who in 2006 invited Swiss architect Peter Zumthor to propose a massive transformation of the museum's historic core. "It's not a fully designed building, and it has no donors attached to it yet," Govan adds, but the result of all Zumthor's thinking is nonetheless about to go public.

Organized by Govan and head curator of LACMA's decorative arts and design department Wendy Kaplan, with curatorial assistant Staci Steinberger, "The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA" opens June 9 as part of the Getty's "Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A." initiative. Featuring the Pritzker Prize-winning architect's preliminary designs and models, and a historical section detailing LACMA's architectural evolution, the show will situate Zumthor's ambitious scheme in the context of the institution's history and site.

Since its launch in 1965, LACMA has expanded from three to eight buildings, spread across 20 acres of a park that is also home to the La Brea Tar Pits, one of the world's richest sources of prehistoric

animal fossils. In consideration of that location, the show will include a 50-footlong mural of life in the Pleistocine epoch, painted in 1925 by Charles R. Knight, as well as drawings of Tar Pit fossils by scientific illustrator John L. Ridgway. Also on view will be material related to the Zumthor scheme's predecessor: Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas's proposed plan to supplant LACMA's old buildings with a rectangular structure capped by a tentlike roof. Although the museum's board endorsed the concept in 2001, it was never realized, mainly for lack of funds. Nevertheless, Govan says, two important lessons emerged from that design: first, that "it was possible to reimagine an encyclopedic museum," and second, that "it was not cost-feasible to

Since Govan arrived at LACMA in 2006, he has overseen major changes on the west side of the campus. Recent additions there include the Broad Contemporary Art Museum and the Lynda and Stuart Resnick Exhibition Pavilion, both designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, and monumental sculptures by Chris Burden and Michael Heizer. Govan explains Zumthor's eastside overhaul in terms of accessibility and transparency. A large portion of the museum's 100,000-piece collection, he says, which comes from around the globe and represents ancient times to the present day, will be on view in open storage. Visitors will be able to look out at LACMA's other buildings and surrounding grounds, including the Tar Pits



renovate LACMA's old buildings."

Zumthor, who is known for powerfully spare structures, envisions a dramatic clarification of an architectural muddle on the east side of the campus. He wants to demolish the original threebuilding complex designed by William L. Pereira and a 1986 showcase designed by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates leaving untouched the 1988 Japanese Pavilion, conceived by Bruce Goff—and replace them with a single, biomorphic structure that Zumthor describes as "an organic shape, like a water lily" that appears to float. A vast, roughly 400,000-square-foot horizontal structure with a solar-tiled roof and curved glass walls, it will be energy-efficient and veranda-like, expressing what he calls "urbanistic energy."

▲ Zumthor's proposed LACMA building includes archives and study centers visible behind transparent facades.

and Wilshire Boulevard, and those strolling around the structure's undulating periphery can glimpse what's going on inside.

"It's a building that faces everything," Govan says. "And art will be on view 24/7. Once you are inside, there will be a nice gradation of experience from open storage and relatively casual space to meditative galleries."

Suzanne Muchnic, former art writer for the Los Angeles Times, is a Los Angeles correspondent for Artnews.

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## Morning in Cambodia

After decades of oppression and trauma, artists are reemerging in the Southeast Asian nation, and the world is taking notice BY BARBARA POLLACK

or many Americans, their only impression of Cambodia is the 1984 film *The Killing Fields*, whose storyline recalls the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime that came to power after illegal carpet-bombings by the United States during the Vietnam War. Americans who may have visited the country more recently probably came away with inspiring snapshots of the temple complex of Angkor Wat, but little familiarity with the country's nas-

cent art scene. In April, those impressions were broadened to include contemporary art and culture when Season of Cambodia, a two-month-long arts festival held at 34 venues and featuring more than 125 Cambodian artists, opened in New York City.

"Five years ago, we had 20/20 vision of what Cambodia could be with a revival of the culture, so nationally and internationally people will think of

Vandy Rattana's photograph *Takeo*, 2009, from the "Bomb Ponds" series.

Cambodia not just through the tragedy of the Killing Fields, but through the living arts," says Phloeun Prim, executive director of Cambodian Living Arts, the nonprofit that organized Season of Cambodia and has nurtured the nation's culture since 1998. Preserving the arts, however, is a complicated task in this traumatized country where as many as 90 percent of local artists and intellectuals were slaughtered during the reign of Khmer Rouge dictator Pol Pot.

"I was thinking with Season of Cambodia that this has been a lifelong dream for me-to have art be an international signature of my country," says Arn Chorn-Pond, founder of Cambodian Living Arts. As a young boy, Chorn-Pond survived the Khmer Rouge because of his flute-playing talent, while his whole family was murdered. He was brought to the United States from a refugee camp at the age of, 14 and later studied international relations at Brown University. After gaining experience in U.S. nonprofits, he chose to bring that model to Cambodia, spurred by a visit to his homeland in the 1990s.

"I wanted to give respect to the art form that saved my life in the first place," Chorn-Pond says. So he found a handful of masters in Khmer music and dance and established programs where young people could learn those traditions. Later, he supported contemporary artists through Cambodian Living





■ The Royal Ballet of Cambodia performing The Legend of Apsara Mera.

U.S. bombs. The festival also brought several artists to New York for a residency, most inhabiting studios provided by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

"Our goal was to simply open a dialogue," says Erin Gleeson, who cocurated the visual-arts component of the festival with Leeza Ahmady. "We wanted to allow them to be seen as artists first and foremost rather than be defined by nation." Still, there is a strong sense of place and history in many of the works

that explore the American destruction in Cambodia, transforming trauma into compelling art.

According to Gleeson, some of the challenges facing artists in Cambodia are the lack of even a single contemporary art museum, the scarcity of art education, and the constant threat of censorship. While Pich acknowledges the political risks, he says that most artists work around this. "Yes, there is censorship, but none of us really try to test it. You have to ask yourself if you want to live here the rest of your life or just make a splash and then leave. There are powers that you cannot win." But, Gleeson notes, many of the artists work more metaphorically or poetically, so they escape limitations on their work.

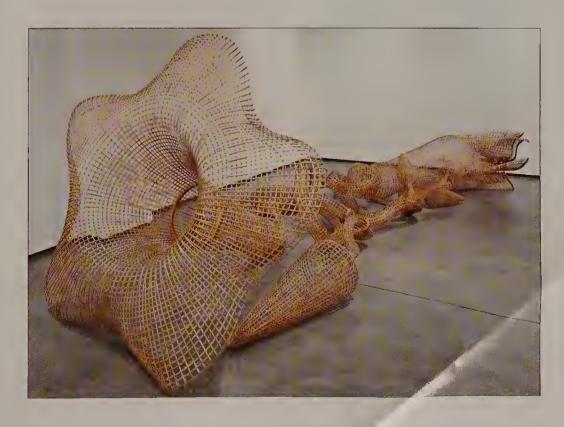
"I want people to see that this is not just a festival—it's really a whole movement. It is an artist-led project, not from any government or ministry of culture," says Prim, adding that the entire budget for the festival was a modest \$2.9 million. "We are 30 years past one of the worst genocides, and we are rebuilding a whole society, preserving the culture by connecting masters to a young generation. It is a story of a country, a story of resilience, and it is a story that other countries may be inspired by."

Barbara Pollack is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

Arts. "It really was a state of emergency," he says. "Art has the power to bring back the pride and the confidence in my people."

Sopheap Pich is one Cambodian artist currently receiving a great deal of exposure from his participation in the festival. The sculptor, who bends and ties bamboo and rattan into large freestanding forms and wall reliefs, is currently featured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (through July 7) and has a gallery show at Tyler Rollins Fine Art (through June 14). Over at the Asia Society, Vandy Rattana, who at 33 is too young to have experienced the Vietnam War firsthand, presented "Bomb Ponds," her series of photographs and a video that explores the terrible beauty of changes to the Cambodian landscape caused by

Sopheap Pich, Morning Glory, 2011, rattan, bamboo, plywood, wire, and steel bolts.



# 'Bridging Cleveland'

In a private-public partnership, a new space in a repurposed industrial structure will become a satellite of the city's

**museum** BY STEVEN LITT

n collaboration with the Cleveland Museum of Art, renowned photography collectors Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell of Peninsula, Ohio, have transformed a neglected piece of industrial infrastructure in the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland into a showplace for contemporary art. The Transformer Station opened earlier this year, and it has already begun to shift the cultural center of gravity further west in a city where all major institutions, including the museum, are sited east of the Cuyahoga River.

Shaped like a chunky Renaissance-style bank building with handsomely detailed brick facades, the structure served as a private streetcar company's substation between 1924 and 1949, and was used as a fine-art foundry from the 1980s until the Bidwells bought it in 2010. Fred Bidwell, 60, a retired advertising executive and long-time resident of Northeast Ohio, believes that culture can help revive declining industrial cities like Cleveland. "The way back is through the arts," he says.

Inspired by examples such as the Rubell Family Collection in Miami—a former Drug Enforcement Agency warehouse turned contemporary-art space—the Bidwells worked with Cleveland



architect John C. Williams of Process Creative Studios on the venue's \$2.5 million renovation and expansion. In its new state, the Transformer Station has doubled in size to 7,944 square feet, with high clerestory windows lighting two large galleries that total about 3,500 square feet. But what really distinguishes the structure is the large hook and chain dangling from an overhead crane left intact in the original part of the building—a charming feature from an industrial past that the Bidwells plan to use to move heavy sculptures.

In 2011, the Cleveland Museum of Art—where Bidwell is a trustee—asked to share the Transformer Station for part of the year as a way to open its first satellite space. The Bidwells agreed, and under the ensuing arrangement, each party will program exhibitions for alternating six-month periods. After 15 to 20 years, the Bidwells will donate the building to the museum, along with half of their collection of more than 700 works by the likes of Tina Barney, Chuck Close, Adam Fuss, and Andrew Moore. The remaining half of the collection will go to the Akron Art Museum, where Fred has served as president and both Bidwells have been trustees.

▲ The Transformer Station's inaugural exhibition featured photographs of Cleveland bridges by Vaughn Wascovich.

According to the Cleveland Museum, the value of the deal is between \$5.5 million and \$7.5 million; museum director David Franklin says he intends to use the new branch for experiments that aren't possible in the institution's more formal, buttoned-down home base.

For the site's inaugural exhibition, the Bidwells commissioned a suite of photographs by Cleveland native Vaughn Wascovich. Titled "Bridging Cleveland," the series featured muralsize images of bridges over the Cuyahoga River. (The space's current show, up through August 23, presents dreamy landscape photographs by Ohio artist Todd Hido.) With its focus on structures that cross the river that divides the city, the Wascovich show embodied precisely what the Bidwells and the Cleveland Museum hope the Transformer Station will do for Cleveland as a whole.

Steven Litt is the art and architecture critic of the Plain Dealer in Cleveland.

# Pierce Boshelly

Confessions of a Concentration Camp Guard: Works in Marble, Bronze, and Oil











CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Intercourse*, oil on linen, 30 x 40"; *In the Evening*, oil on linen, 30 x 40"; *Balanced*, hydrostone 45 x 25 x 20"; *Nude Figure*, oil on linen, 30 x 40"; *Down on Knees*, marble, 30 x 20 x 15"

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#### News Briefs

#### TRANSITIONS

**Eugene Tan** has been named executive director of

the new National Art Gallery, Singapore. Most recently program director of special projects at Singapore Economic Development Board, Tan is the first person to hold this position.

**David van der Leer** is

the new executive director

of the Van Alen Institute,

a nonprofit architectural

organization in New York.



Annette Kulenkampff.

Fridericianum Veranstaltungs -GmbH in

Formerly curator of the BMW

Guggenheim Lab, van der

Leer succeeds Olympia Kazi.

**Annette** Kulenkampff

Kassel, Germany. She was most recently head of Hatie Cantz Publishers.

has been named

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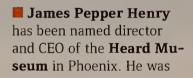
managing

director of

Elysia Borowy-Reeder has been appointed executive director of the Museum of Contemporary Art **Detroit**. Most recently

executive director of the Contemporary Art Museum Raleigh in North Carolina, Borowy-Reeder replaces Luis Croquer.

Paul Hobson is the new director of Modern Art Oxford. Formerly director of the Contemporary Art Society in London, Hobson replaces the late Michael Stanley.



previously director of the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center.

AWARDS

Paul Hobson.



Matt Saunders has received the Jean-

François Prat Prize. The €20,000 award is given annually to a contemporary artist by the Paris law firm Bredin Prat. -Stephanie Strasnick



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# Portrait of an Elusive Artist

Titian: His Life

By Sheila Hale

Harper, 832 pages, \$39.99

#### BY WILLIAM E. WALLACE

hy do we want to read about Titian, an artist whose obsession with wealth and status provoked an exasperated contemporary to remark that he "does nothing other than demand money." The great Venetian artist was not a sympathetic character. He was a tyrannical father and relentless self-promoter; avaricious in pursuit of money, benefices, and privileges; cavalier in his dealings with princes and patrons; and perpetually tardy in fulfilling obligations. He bickered with officials for 36 years regarding a promised benefice, all the while

greatly exaggerating his poverty and advanced age, once claiming to be 85 when he was at most 67. (Uncertain of his birthdate, most scholars accept that he died at 86, although his death certificate declared him to be 103.)

If patrons were often dilatory in keeping their promises, so too was Titian a master of prevarication. He managed to put off the commission to paint the *Battle of Spoleto* in the Doge's Palace for 28 years while receiving a sinecure the entire time. Later in his life, his relations with his eldest son, Pomponio, became so acrimonious that the two stopped speaking. Titian's entire correspondence, largely written by others on his behalf since he wrote a clumsy if not inarticulate Italian, is preoccupied with business and money matters.

What redeems such a character and justifies a biography of more than 800 pages? Titian was simply the greatest and most prolific painter in an age known for its abundant talent. His extant portraits—between 70 and 100 autograph paintings—present a gallery of the most prominent persons of the age. According to his closest friend, Pietro Aretino, Titian could produce portraits "as quickly as another could scratch the ornament on a chest," but even more remarkable, they were living likenesses. Without ever having met the Countess Pepoli, Titian painted her portrait from a verbal description and everyone, including the astute connoisseur Isabella d'Este, agreed that it was a perfect match. He performed a similar miracle in painting Isabella when she was 60 years old, obese, and "indecently ugly." The resulting "portrait" presents an extremely attractive young woman, thus fixing forever a fetching image of the great patroness.



A Titian self-portrait, ca. 1562.

Although Titian's brush reveals his sitters, the painter remains elusive. Therefore, Hale's biography is as much a portrait of the artist's times, his contemporaries, and the city of Venice. Hale immerses us in the bustling life and multicolored splendor of "the wealthiest, most sophisticated, most cosmopolitan, most admired—and most hated—metropolis in Europe."

We learn that half of all the books produced in Italy were printed in Venice and we gain insight into its thriving humanist culture. We are introduced to many of the ruling oligarchs and their manner of dress and their forms of entertainment, including the book listing 110 courtesans along with their prices and specialties.

Hale sketches vivid portraits of many of Titian's friends, patrons, and contemporaries, with long digressions

devoted to Aretino and some of the artist's most important patrons, including Pope Paul III, Emperor Charles V, Philip II of Spain, Federico Gonzaga, and the detested Pope Paul IV.

Despite its length, this is an easy and interesting read. Hale offers pithy descriptions of Titian's pictures, and notes the loss of more than 60 works, including major masterpieces destroyed in tragic fires: the *Battle of Spoleto*, the *Death of Saint Peter Martyr*, and the series of 11 Roman Caesars (for Gonzaga), which were among the artist's most frequently copied and reproduced works.

On the other hand, Hale's imagination and prose sometimes take flight, as when she describes Titian's arrival in Venice: "his provincial clothes creased from the long journey, taking it all in with that disarming hawkish gaze." She fancifully pictures the artist in a studio filled with dogs (since they appear often in his pictures), as well as "luscious girls, naked or *en negligée*." The studio, according to Hale's anachronistic description, "must have been something like the backstage of a theatre, full of props and costumes and models in various states of undress practicing their poses."

Such caveats aside, there are few more engaging guides to Venice and the city's greatest artist than Hale. She paints a vast canvas rich in detail and relates a story thick with incident and swirling with energy.

William E. Wallace is Barbara Murphy Bryant Distinguished Professor of Art History at Washington University in Saint Louis. His most recent book is Michelangelo: The Artist, the Man, and His Times (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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# Girl with a Hoop Earring: Fun with Vermeer

The descendants of
Vermeer's enigmatic
beauties have been stripped
by Dalí, bedecked in toiletpaper rolls, and reincarnated
in spools of thread

BY ROBIN CEMBALEST



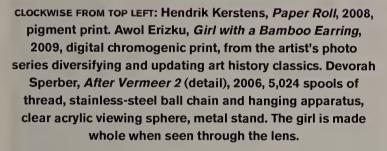
Johannes Vermeer, Girl with a Pearl Earring, ca. 1665, oil on canvas.

dermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, whose beauty and inscrutability have famously inspired art, fiction, product design, a Barbie, a Jonathan Richman song, and a whole lot of Flickr self-portraits, doesn't get out of Holland much.

So for fans, her current United States tour—which began at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, continues at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (June 23 through September 29), and ends this fall in New York, at the Frick—is like "the World Series, Super Bowl and Masters rolled into one magic moment," as *USA Today* put it.

The enigmatic masterpiece, painted ca. 1665, is traveling with 34 other Dutch Golden Age paintings while their normal home, the Mauritshuis, undergoes renovation. But at each of these venues, she gets a room to herself.





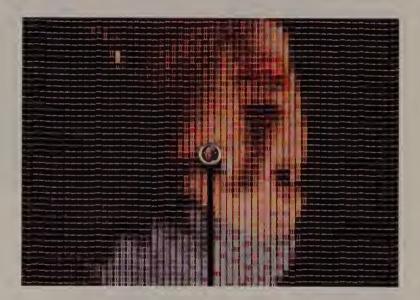
While *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was hardly a wallflower at the Mauritshuis, she wasn't quite the type to headline a show—until 2003, when she got her Hollywood break. Being played by Scarlett Johansson in Peter Webber's film version of Tracy Chevalier's novel brought the Girl new fame; to the dismay of art historians, though, the audience sometimes concluded that the book's main character, a maid who posed for Vermeer, was real.

Scholars don't know who sat for the picture, which was not intended to be a specific portrait of anyone. That in itself wasn't unusual in those days. What was unusual, says de Young curator Melissa Buron, was the three-quarter view, which highlights the sense that the woman is about to speak.

Adding to the Girl's allure is her distinctive ultramarine turban—not exactly Dutch fashion at the time, either, but relatively easy to recreate in ours. Thanks to the fame of the *Girl With the Pearl Earring*, that Orientalist detail appears to us now as characteristically Dutch.

Vermeer's mysterious women continue to seduce and inspire artists. Here are a few of their heirs of more recent vintage.

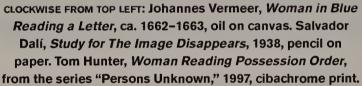




Dutch Old Masters get a different twist in Hendrik Kerstens's color photographs, which were on view last winter at Danziger Gallery in Chelsea (see review, page 93). Each one depicts the artist's daughter Paula in get-ups that evoke 17th-century portraits, but with their lovingly rendered hoods and bonnets replaced by bubble wrap, tin foil, and other humble materials. These in turn inspired high fashion when Alexander McQueen used them as fodder for his fall 2009 collection.

Robin Cembalest is executive editor of ARTnews.





Meanwhile, further south, another iconic Vermeer was also in California for a spell: the J. Paul Getty Museum staged a special installation of *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter*, on loan for six weeks while Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum prepared for its reopening. She was surrounded by other views of intimate interiors by Vermeer contemporaries, including Jan Steen, Gerard ter Borch, and Pieter de Hooch.

This enigmatic beauty (who also has pearls, in a necklace on the table) has inspired speculation for centuries: Is the message from a lover? Does the map have a meaning? Is the woman pregnant, or just fashionably dressed?

These open-ended stories were a lifetime provocation for Dalí, who admired Vermeer's precision and reproduced the Dutch master's content through the filter of his own unconscious. (Also, he set up an encounter between a rhino and a copy of *The Lacemaker* at a zoo, as you can see on YouTube.)

In addition to recapitulating the *The Lacemaker* repeatedly, Dalí painted the mysterious *Apparition of the Figure of Vermeer on the Face of Abraham Lincoln* (1938) and *The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft Which Can Be Used as a Table* (1934), to name a few. Then there's *The Image Disappears* (1938), an illusion that turns Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (1657) into the profile of a bearded male—and back again. (Her head is his eye and her elbow his nose).





A study for the painting, in the "Drawing Surrealism" show that recently appeared at LACMA and at the Morgan, tells us more about what was on Dalí's mind. This one, clearly showing the optical illusion in the works, has two versions of the letter reader: one dressed, the other naked.

It was Vermeer's ability to confer nobility on the ordinary that attracted British photographer Tom Hunter. Hunter, who was living amidst squatters in Hackney, wanted to produce art that would help them in their struggle against authorities—not with "the usual stock of blackand-white images of the victims of society," as he put it, but with serenity, beauty, dignity, light, and space. The girl in this photograph is reading an eviction order.

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If you can't make it to the West Coast, remember that the East has plenty of Vermeers on public view, with five at the Metropolitan, three at the Frick, and three at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.—not bad considering that there are 36 extant works by the artist (including the one still missing from the Gardner Museum theft; see page 36).

Vermeer left relatively few documents about his sitters, or his symbols, but radiographs of one of the Met's paintings yield tantalizing clues about his process. Originally, the figure in *A Maid Asleep* (ca. 1656–57) was accompanied by a man in the background and a dog in the doorway. Later, Vermeer replaced them with a mirror and a chair. With the love interest gone, we have to create the narrative ourselves.

Museums are offering new ways to engage with Vermeer through social media. The Getty blog asked people to send in a first sentence for the letter. The de Young Tumblr, following the *Guardian's* lead, put out a call for imagined versions of the Girl's story.

The next thing you know, Vermeer's inscrutable beauties will be telling their own versions on Twitter. The handle @girlwithapearlearring seems to be open.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Johannes Vermeer, A Maid Asleep, ca. 1656–57. Tom Hunter, A Woman Asleep, from the series "Persons Unknown," 1997. For The Music Lesson, 1999. Hiroshi Sugimoto photographed a wax tableau of the original painting installed in Madame Tussauds in Amsterdam.





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# DEGAS Debate

Are 74 plasters 'discovered' in a foundry storeroom 'original' works by Degas? A Degas scholar analyzes the sculptures, outlines the controversy, and considers competing meanings of 'original'

#### BY PATRICIA FAILING

#### Posthumous reproductions have played a

contentious role in the artistic legacies of Auguste Rodin, Edgar Degas, and other important sculptors who died in the early 20th century. Debates among connoisseurs about what counts as "original labor" or an "authentic copy" are often confusing and sometimes open to lawsuits. Nevertheless, sculpture created by an artist with his or her own hands usually counts as "original" and typically serves as a benchmark in determining the authenticity of copies.

Recently, dealers marketing bronzes cast from plaster replicas of Degas's handmade sculptures have proposed a novel twist to these standard assumptions. Their bronzes and plasters differ—radically in some cases—from Degas's existing originals, not because they are inaccurate copies, the dealers say, but because these bronzes and plasters are, in effect, *more* original.

According to Leonardo Benatov, current owner of the Airaindor Valsuani Foundry outside of Paris, the plaster

versions were part of the inventory when he purchased the Valsuani Foundry in 1980. In the 1990s, after the copyright on Degas's sculpture had expired, Benatov cast several of these plasters in bronze, including two editions based on Degas's celebrated *The Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*. Benatov later granted New York dealer Walter Maibaum the exclusive right to sell full sets of bronzes made from the Valsuani plasters.

Maibaum and Benatov initially assumed that the plasters were posthumous casts created by Albino Palazzolo, the expert who supervised the casting of Degas's original wax, clay, and plastiline sculptures in bronze at the Hébrard Foundry in Paris after the artist's death in 1917. The resulting Hébrard bronzes are in major museum collections throughout the world.

In 2005, Gregory Hedberg, now a senior consultant at

Patricia Failing is a professor of art history at the University of Washington in Seattle and an ARTnews contributing editor.



New York's Hirschl & Adler Galleries, examined the Valsuani *Little Dancer* plaster and decided that this "magnificent" cast was not, in fact, a posthumous copy but was instead a plaster made during Degas's lifetime. Hedberg subsequently decided that nearly all the Valsuani plasters were casts made during the artist's lifetime from his orig-

inal wax and clay sculptures. Since then, at least eight sets of Valsuani bronzes based on these plasters have been sold for prices said to be in the range of \$7 million.

As ARTnews has reported in previous articles, no major Degas sculpture specialist has expressed agreement with Hedberg's view. Gary Tinterow, former head of European painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and now director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, told ARTnews that "there is nothing that demonstrates that Degas had a set of plaster casts made of his sculptures during his lifetime." Yet the Valsuani bronze sculptures continue to attract buyers. The Valsuani plasters Benatov says he found in 1980 have been sold to private collectors as well. The Valsuani plasters illustrated in this article are copies of the plasters now in private collections, and are currently in use at the Valsuani Foundry.

In a 2010 letter to *ART-news*, Hedberg summed up his understanding of

the disagreements between the dealers and the scholars. The "key issue boils down to this," he wrote: The dealers believe that the similarities between the Hébrard and Valsuani sculptures are "due to the fact that the [Valsuani] plasters were cast from Degas' original waxes . . . while Degas was alive." The differences in appearance

came about because Degas "repaired and reworked some models. Then, after Degas' death, additional repairs were made." The dealers reason that if the Valsuani plasters represent the artist's first versions of his figures, before later or posthumous changes were made, they should be recognized as records of his original vision.

Hedberg characterizes the view of the scholars on the

other side as follows: they believe that the Valsuani plasters "record extraordinary copies made by some highly skilled sculptor who at times faithfully recorded Degas' original waxes and at other times made his or her own variations."

None of the major Degas specialists has commented

in print on this possibility. But Hedberg's proposal does offer an intriguing set of options when we turn to specific examples.

#### Some of the more

notable differences in appearance between a Valsuani plaster and a sculpture modeled by Degas's own hand are to be found in the artist's well-known figure The Little Dancer Aged Fourteen. First shown at the 1881 Impressionist exhibition in Paris, the Little Dancer is the only sculpture Degas exhibited during his lifetime. This wax figure, along with most of his lifetime wax sculptures, is in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The Little Dancer is slim, with long, sinewy legs and her feet splayed in a casual fourth position. Most of the figure's weight rests on the straight left leg; the extended right leg is slightly relaxed. Achieving this pose pushes the hips into a contrapposto position, with the left hip higher and at an

oblique angle to the right.

In contrast, the Valsuani plaster *Little Dancer* exhibits a different pose and body type. The upper legs are conspicuously heavier and more muscular; both knees are slightly bent; weight is distributed equally on both feet; and the hips are squared to the front. The collarbones

and neck muscles are more prominent than those of the wax, and the hairstyle is quite different when viewed from the rear.

The faces of the two figures also differ. The plaster face is more regular, almost conventionally pretty, and relatively serene, with fuller, lowered eyelids casting deep shadows over the eyeballs. The eyelids of the National



A rare photo of a Hébrard bronze Little Dancer without its tutu illustrates its differences from the Valsuani Little Dancer (plaster, opposite page).

Gallery wax figure, in contrast, are half closed, and the pupils are incised to suggest a downward gaze. The right eye has a slightly different shape than the left. These details play into an effect that senior Degas scholar Theodore Reff has described as "a sense of strain or suffering, reflecting her effort to maintain her awkward pos-

ture and, mingled with it, a vaguely sensual yearning, especially in the half-closed eyes."

The Valsuani Little Dancer, according to Hedberg, is not an inaccurate copy of the wax sculpture now in the National Gallery. Nor is it a cast made from that figure. The differences between the Valsuani plaster and the National Gallery wax, he argues, result from an undocumented decision by Degas to rework his composition after completing a first version.

Hedberg believes that the wax figure in the National Gallery—the model for the familiar Hébrard bronzes with tutus displayed in museums all over the worldwas not the figure Degas exhibited in 1881. That figure is represented instead by the Valsuani plaster. The National Gallery dancer, he says, is an anatomically inferior, second version of the 1881 figure, probably created around 1903.

Thus, according to his logic, the Valsuani plaster represents the original

version, while the existing wax Degas modeled by hand should be recognized as a mannered later variation of his original concept.

Contrary to a long history of Degas scholarship, Hedberg writes in a catalogue accompanying exhibitions of the Valsuani sculptures that "although extremely popular, no connoisseur of 19th-century sculpture ranks Degas' second version as an unqualified masterpiece." The first version of the *Little Dancer* recorded in the Valsuani plaster and bronzes, he says, is "a masterpiece that can rival any work of art ever produced by the greatest artists of all time."

Hedberg faces a number of obstacles in building support for his new history of the *Little Dancer*. There are no



The Valsuani plaster Little
Dancer is a heavier, more
muscular figure, standing
with hips squared and
weight distributed equally
on both feet.

photographs of the 1881 Impressionist exhibition, and no letters by the artist related to the *Little Dancer* project survive. Contemporary viewers of the exhibition were remarkably inconsistent in their descriptions of the dancer's size, costume, skin, hair, and social identity. As Degas scholar Richard Kendall has observed, these dis-

crepancies indicate that "Degas' diminutive ballerina proved as disorienting to audiences as the grandest projects of the day, overturning assumptions, crossing the frontiers of propriety and apparently threatening the identity of sculpture itself."

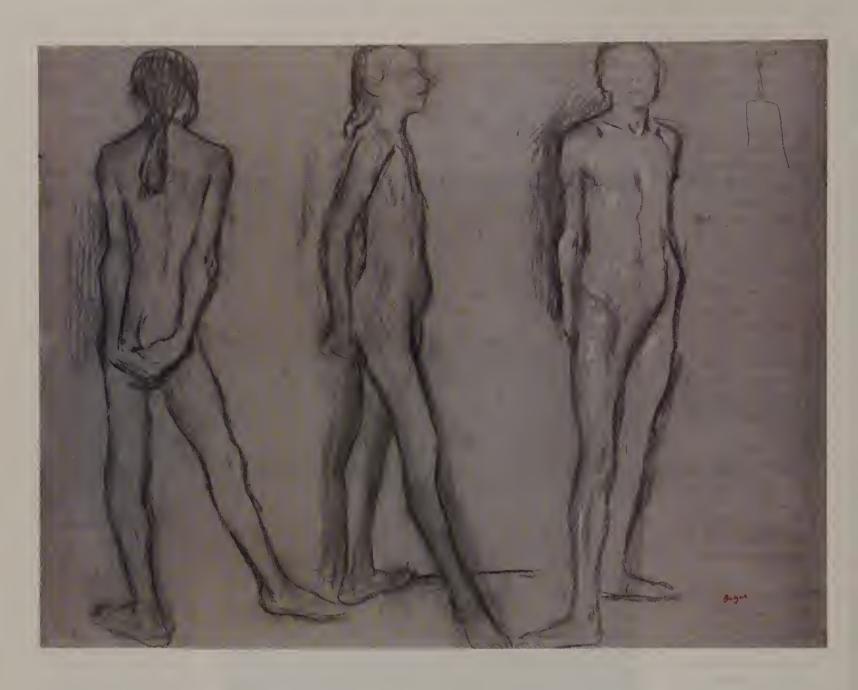
The Little Dancer was never exhibited again, although the figure was on view in Degas's studio. Shortly after the artist's death, inventory photographs of his sculpture were taken, including three images of the wax Little Dancer now in the National Gallery. In these photos, the dancer looks very much the same as it does today.

If Hedberg is correct, we should accept that the National Gallery's wax Little Dancer is the same sculptural object as the figure recorded in the Valsuani plaster, and that, decades after he created the Valsuani figure, Degas transformed his original, static, level-hipped, large-legged 1881 model into a thinner, young dancer with long shins

and thigh muscles and a new face, standing in a different pose.

This unique theory is difficult to square with relevant technical studies and visual documents. The best evidence for the sculpture's original conception and development consists of several drawings of the model for the sculp-

ture, Marie van Goethem. In 1879, the 14-year old Marie was a second-year student in the dance school of the Paris Opera, and in 1880 she was recruited for the Opera Ballet. There are more drawings of Marie than of any other Degas model (at least 16, according to Reff). Dance historian Jill DeVonyar, who has cocurated several exhibitions of Degas's work, writes that drawings of Marie



show a model "blessed with considerable physical gifts: good turn-out, long limbs, flexion in her ankles and a supple back."

In many of the drawings, Marie wears a tutu covering her upper legs. There are several studies of Marie in the nude, however, illustrating the same figure type, with the hips, legs, and right foot in the same position as the National

Gallery dancer. As far as we know, the *Little Dancer* was Degas's most ambitious early sculpture. Kendall has proposed that the nude drawings served as traditional preliminary studies, and represent "a cautious temporary return to routines of his youth by an artist facing an unfamiliar challenge." The nude drawings are characteristic of Degas's graphic style around 1878–80. None resembles the figure represented in the Valsuani plaster.

One series of nude drawings includes a sketch of the basic armature Degas used to create the National Gallery sculpture. Degas's armature also plays a key role in assessing Hedberg's claim that the National Gallery sculpture is a revised second version of a Valsuani original.

In 2010, the National Gallery published *Edgar Degas Sculpture*, an unprecedented systematic catalogue of the

The 14-year-old Marie van
Goethem was Degas's
model for the Little
Dancer. He sketched the
armature he intended to
use in making the wax
sculpture at top right.

wax, clay, and plastiline sculpture Degas created during his lifetime. For this catalogue, National Gallery conservators Shelley G. Sturman and Daphne S. Barbour, together with three National Gallery scientists, carried out detailed technical studies of the Degas sculptures in the gallery's collection. The studies included three-dimensional computer models; laser scans; x-

radiography; and spectroscopic, chromatographic, and microscopic analyses. With these technologies, the conservators and scientists were able to track the physical histories of the sculptures and document alterations and repairs made during and after the artist's lifetime.

They confirmed that the most conspicuous posthumous revisions resulted from the removal of Degas's external armatures and their replacement in many cases with new supports. Some of these interventions occurred when Palazzolo prepared the sculptures for casting at Hébrard's foundry shortly after the artist's death. Others date from the early to middle 1950s, when Palazzolo prepared the original wax and clay sculptures for sale. In 1955, the 69 extant Degas wax sculptures were imported to the United States and sold to collector Paul Mellon,

who ultimately donated 52 of them to the National Gallery and the rest to other museums.

The Little Dancer Aged Fourteen receives more attention in the National Gallery catalogue than any other sculpture. The internal construction of this wax figure includes a lead-pipe armature, pieces of wood, organic material resembling cotton batting, paintbrush handles, rope, and clay. The external surface is fashioned from molten beeswax highlighted with colored pigment applied directly or mixed with the wax.

If the Valsuani plaster does represent the "first version" of the *Little Dancer*, achieving the complex pose of the National Gallery "second version" figure would apparently require a complicated invasion of this improvised interior as well as a remodeling of the exterior surface. Hedberg, however, believes that Degas solved the makeover problem primarily by excavating and remelting wax from the level right hip of the Valsuani "original" and relocating this material to create the higher left hip on the National Gallery figure.

Even if this shift were possible, other complex adjustments would have been required to transform the Valsuani figure into the National Gallery sculpture. The lead-pipe armature supporting each leg is nailed to the base of the National Gallery sculpture. Achieving Hed-

berg's "second version" of the composition would have required bending the armature in the "first-version" right leg in a different direction, pulling it out below the "original" knee and moving it backward on the base. After the armature had been relocated, the "original" right leg would need to be entirely refashioned below the knee and the right foot turned in a different angle.

Barbour and Sturman meticulously documented physical alterations in all 52 Degas sculptures in the National Gallery collection. They observed no such adjustments to the armature, form, and surface of the *Little Dancer*. Furthermore, they point out that "the clay surrounding the lead pipes in the feet and lower legs served to 'cement' the armature in place and prevent any movement or change in the dancer's pose."

Pressed against the weight of this visual and technical evidence, Hedberg's account of the "original" and "second version" of the Little Dancer appears less substantial than the alternative he attributes to his opposition, namely that the Valsuani plaster is a copy made by a sculptor who "at times faithfully recorded Degas' original waxes and at other times made his or her own variations."

The complex construction of Degas's wax Little Dancer is visible in a radiograph (left) and a schematic diagram of the inner armature (far right). The figure was examined by a team of conservators and scientists at the National Gallery of Art. When Degas died, in 1917, about 150 sculptures, many in bad condition, were found in his studio. None of these sculptures, with the exception of the *Little Dancer*, had ever been exhibited in public. Although Degas did not authorize posthumous casting, his heirs decided to reproduce the salvageable sculptures in bronze editions. After months of squabbling, they entered into a contract with the Hébrard Foundry to cast 73 of the sculptures. A 74th figure, *The Schoolgirl*, was cast in bronze years later.

A leading player in this conflict was Degas's colleague, the sculptor Albert Bartholomé, who apparently believed that he was the right man to personally supervise repairs and the casting process. Degas's friend Mary Cassatt and the artist's nephews were adamantly opposed to Bartholomé, who, according to Cassatt, needed to "wrap himself in Degas' glory because he himself lacked any." Degas's dealer, Joseph Durand-Ruel, also concluded that it would be dangerous to entrust the sculptures to Bartholomé "because everyone would say they were redone by Bartholomé and they would lose their value." Ultimately Bartholomé brokered a compromise by recommending that the casting be entrusted to Hébrard.

According to Hedberg, Bartholomé would have been the right man to supervise the job because Hedberg believes





that Bartholomé had already cast many of Degas's wax sculptures in plaster for his own private collection. Some of the casts Bartholomé made for himself, Hedberg claims, recorded earlier versions of Degas's sculptures, before Degas made small and sometimes major revisions to those figures over the years. Bartholomé's private plasters ultimately found their way to the Valsuani Foundry, he continues, where they were rediscovered years later. Therefore, Hedberg concludes, "the [Valsuani] plasters were cast from Degas' original waxes . . . while Degas was

alive." They record earlier or first versions of the sculptures before they were revised by Degas, damaged by environmental conditions, or "corrected" by Palazzolo. However, there is no record that Bartholomé's private plasters ever existed.

Bartholomé is also invoked to account for a statistical and historical improbability: Degas's heirs selected 74 waxes to be cast in bronze from the approximately 150 sculptures remaining in the artist's studio. According to Hedberg, Bartholomé had made plaster copies of Degas's works beginning in the late 1880s, yet the Bartholomé/Valsuani plasters represent exactly the same 74 examples that were salvaged for casting after the artist's death.

Maibaum offered his explanation for this unlikely outcome in a 2011

letter to *ARTnews*. "It is well known that in 1917–18 Bartholomé assisted the heirs in the decision-making process as to which of the waxes should be cast in bronze. Since Degas allowed Bartholomé to make plasters of certain waxes, it is logical to conclude that Bartholomé told the heirs which of the waxes Degas considered more or less 'finished.' And those are the ones which ultimately were cast in bronze—essentially the same figures as the plasters."

But there is no evidence that Degas had ever "allowed Bartholomé to make plasters of certain waxes." Thérèse Burollet, the leading authority on Bartholomé, who will soon publish a monograph and catalogue raisonné of his work, wrote in an email to *ARTnews*: "Nothing in the documents [I have] consulted, letters, archives, press articles

or family traditions, allows one to think Bartholomé cast in plaster a single work by Degas either during his lifetime or in 1917" (the year of Degas's death).

If Bartholomé did not cast early versions of sculptures Degas revised at a later date, how are we to explain the formal discrepancies between many of the Valsuani plasters and Degas's surviving originals?

Maibaum has proposed yet another framework for assessing the status of the Valsuani plasters. In a paper not

listed on the program but distributed at a colloquium on posthumous bronzes held last spring at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Maibaum argued that the critical question in determining the plasters' authenticity is: "Were the plasters made from Degas' waxes? If the answer is yes, the plasters are authentic.... In essence, if the physical evidence substantiates that the plasters were made from Degas' waxes, they must be authentic, no matter if it can or cannot be determined as to who made them or when."

The physical evidence Maibaum cites includes comparisons between the plasters and the inventory photographs of the waxes taken shortly after Degas's death and some measurements comparing the plasters to a unique set of Degas bronzes—the modèles—

in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.

The modèles are the first Degas bronzes cast at Hébrard. As Palazzolo explained in a 1955 interview, in order to preserve Degas's handmade creations, he used flexible gelatin molds to make a set of duplicate wax models. These wax "intermodels" were melted in a lost-wax

casting process used to create durable master bronzes—the modèles—from which series of bronzes were subsequently cast. Conservators Barbour and Sturman, who also published a detailed technical study of the Simon master bronzes in 2009, determined that these modèle bronzes were executed with great skill and in some cases now provide a more accurate record of Degas's work than his extant waxes.



Head, Study for Portrait of Mme Salle, Hébrard bronze modèle cast from ca. 1892 wax. The subject is believed to have been a young dancer, Mathilde Salle. Hedberg made approximately 300 point-to-point measurements comparing the Valsuani plasters to the Simon master bronzes. Since bronze can shrink by approximately one to two percent as it cools, and plaster does not shrink, Maibaum reasoned that if the plasters turned out to be larger than the modèles, they were not cast from the modèles and could have been made directly from Degas's handmade waxes. In most cases, Maibaum says, the plasters did turn out to be larger than the modèles. (According to the National Gallery conservators, it

should be noted, plaster generally expands slightly as it dries.)

The logic of this argument is not easy to follow. Maibaum also states in his paper that if the plasters were copies of the modèles, "they would faithfully reproduce the dimensions, forms and details of the corresponding bronzes. They do not."

Since the plasters do not match the forms of the modèle bronzes in some cases and the details of the bronzes in most cases, how could Hedberg make valid point-to-point measurements to compare these different objects? Furthermore, accurate measurements in three dimensions are difficult to attain without specialized technologies such as the three-dimensional laser scans utilized in the recent National Gallery studies of Degas's sculpture.

The physical evidence provided by the 1917–18 inventory photographs Maibaum cites is difficult to assess as well. *Seated Woman Wiping her Left Hip*, for example, is missing her head in the 1917–18 inventory photo-

graph, but the head was returned when Palazzolo made the modèle cast. The modèle retains a visible break in the back of the neck where the head was reattached, but there is no break in the neck of the corresponding Valsuani plaster.

In Maibaum's view, this discrepancy tells us that the Valsuani plaster was probably cast prior to 1917, when the head was still attached. But the missing crack could just as easily be explained as an artistic decision made by Hedberg's hypothetical copyist, who "sometimes made his or her own variations" of Degas's models.

The inventory photographs raise other questions about the dealers' claims. Comparing the existing wax, the inventory photo, and the modèle cast of *Woman Washing Her Left Leg*, for example, Barbour and Sturman ascertained that Degas's original wax figure had been removed from its



The Valsuani plaster Salle study is a different interpretation of the head.

base when it was molded for bronze casting at Hébrard. A wax copy of the figure was made—an intermodel—and joined with a new flat base. Both were then cast together as a unit to create the master bronze.

This new base, a posthumous invention of the Hébrard Foundry, is imitated in the corresponding Valsuani plaster. It is difficult to imagine how the lifetime sculpture said to be represented in the Valsuani plaster could have anticipated revisions made, probably by Palazzolo, years after the artist's death. Similar questions can be raised about the

bases for the Valsuani casts of Horse Trotting, the Feet Not Touching the Ground and Dancer in the Role of Harlequin.

The inventory photograph of Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward presents another kind of challenge. In the photograph, a substantial external armature extends from the base of the sculpture to the top of the figure's head. Large wires attached to this metal rod hold each arm in a curved position around the head. "When the external armature was removed before casting," Sturman and Barbour observed in their text, "the left arm drooped so that it is now rendered almost perpendicular to the body in a compromise of the original intent." The drooping left arm is in the same position in the Valsuani plaster. Why didn't the "lifetime" plaster preserve the artist's original intent instead of replicating an error that resulted from the casting process years after the artist's death?

# Returning to Hedberg's proposals about the origins of the Valsuani plasters and re-

viewing relevant art-historical and technical evidence, we can ask which option is more likely: that the plasters are posthumous freehand copies of Hébrard bronzes or that they were cast from various versions of Degas's original waxes while he was

still alive. If the plasters were cast from Degas's handmade figures after the artist's death, and without permission of the artist or his heirs, do they still count as "authentic"?

The National Gallery's published studies do not confirm Hedberg's assertion that the *Little Dancer* photographed in Degas's studio after his death, and now in the National Gallery, is a revised second version of an earlier level-hipped, large-legged, more static figure with a different pose and face. Furthermore, drawings of the nude model for the sculpture made in the years just before the *Little Dancer* was first shown, in 1881,

clearly resemble the figure and pose in the National Gallery sculpture.

There is no historical evidence of Bartholomé's involvement with the Valsuani plasters, raising serious doubts about the dealers' explanation for the one-to-one correspondence between the set of 74 examples chosen for casting at Hébrard after Degas's death and





the 74 examples represented by the Valsuani plasters.

The measurements and other physical evidence Maibaum cites to support his contention that the plasters were cast from the original waxes are inconclusive, and he does not explain how and when the plasters could have been made, if not by Bartholomé.

There could be interpretations of the history of the Valsuani plasters other than those Hedberg proposes, but at this point the theory that the plasters are post-humous freehand copies modeled after the Hébrard bronzes appears to be the most plausible one. The freehand-copy theory accounts for many of the large and small formal differences between the Valsuani plasters, the Hébrard bronzes, and Degas's handmade waxes. It also explains the one-to-one correspondence between the set of Valsuani plasters and the 74 examples selected for casting after the artist's death.

Valsuani Foundry records document casts of Degas sculpture made at Valsuani by Palazzolo in the 1950s and '60s. Although the Hébrard Foundry, where Palazzolo cast Degas bronzes after the artist's death, closed in the mid-1930s, Palazzolo continued to mark the casts he made years later at Valsuani with the stamp of the old Hébrard Foundry. Since Palazzolo must have brought the Hébrard

Woman Washing Her Left Leg: Degas's wax figure was photographed in his studio after his death in 1917 (left). When the wax figure was cast in bronze at the Hébrard Foundry, it was removed from its original base and given a new, different base, which is seen in the modèle, or master bronze (below left). The Valsuani figure (below) is said to have been cast during Degas's lifetime, but its base imitates the Hébrard base, which was not created until after Degas's death.





master bronzes to Valsuani in order to create these new casts, a complete set of possible models for copyists could have been available at Valsuani for decades.

While such speculations remain unconfirmed, the status of the Valsuani casts seems to be suspended in a gap between two concepts of "original": the plasters as first and lifetime records of Degas's sculptural oeuvre versus the plasters as independently created interpretations, variations, or emulations of Degas's work by another hand (or hands). The plasters' origin remains unknown, but careful assessments of relevant evidence may point the way toward a future resolution.

Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward:

Degas devised an external armature to hold up the wax figure's arms, visible in the studio photograph taken after his death (above). When the armature was removed before casting at Hébrard, the left arm drooped, as seen in the modèle (above right). The Valsuani figure (right) is said to have been cast during Degas's lifetime, but the drooping left arm is in the same position as in the Hébrard bronze, which was not created until after Degas's death.





# SEEDNG DOUBLE

Dream logic, impossible combinations, and visual puns fill the work of Cuban sculpture duo Los Carpinteros

BY GEORGE STOLZ





t the 11th Havana Biennial in May 2012, the Cuban artist duo known as Los Carpinteros staged a curious and complex performance titled Conga Irreversible. Involving nearly 100 dancers, musicians, choreographers, composers, and costume designers, Conga Irreversible consisted of a traditional Cuban carnival street procession, known as a comparsa, performed along Havana's famous Paseo del Prado—but performed, bewilderingly, in reverse. Drummers and horn players played their intricate parts backwards while withdrawing down the center of the crowded street. Singers sang inverted melodies and reversed lyrics. Dancers executed their elaborate movements in reverse through the colonial center of the city all the way to the seaside Malecón. Even the dancers' somber black outfits functioned as a reversal of the comparsa's traditional brightly colored costumes.

While the reactions of passersby ranged from amusement to astonishment, the implications of the anything-but-innocent metaphor were not lost on the Cuban public: Cuban socialism has often proclaimed

OPPOSITE Ciudad
Transportable, 2000,
installed at the 7th Havana
Biennial, became key to
Los Carpinteros's career.
ABOVE The artists, Dago
Rodríguez and Marco
Castillo (right), with
Conga Irreversible
performers in 2012.

itself "irreversible" in the inexorable forward march of history, yet much of the daily
Cuban reality can seem trapped in the past.
Nevertheless, despite its subtext, the piece retained an infectious carnival spirit, delighting the crowds that trailed it along the boulevard. Conga Irreversible encapsulated many of Los Carpinteros's trademark elements: meticulous execution, surrealistic juxtapositions and incongruities, deftness with the delicacies of allegory, an unshakeable rootedness in Cuban culture, and above all, a sly and playful sense of humor.

Los Carpinteros—41-year-old Marco Castillo and 43-year-old Dagoberto Rodríguez—have been working as a team since the early 1990s (a third original member, Alexandre Arrechea, left the group in 2003 to pursue a solo career). Native Cubans, they met in Havana in the 1980s at the prestigious art school Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA). Cuba was then entering what came to be

George Stolz is an ARTnews contributing editor and Madrid correspondent.

known as the "Special Period," a time of extreme austerity provoked by the fall of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of the Soviet economic support on which Cuba had come to rely.

Basic commodities were scarce; poverty and hunger were rampant; and art supplies, even brushes and paints, were hard to come by. So the three students frequently availed themselves of wood, one of Cuba's few abundant resources, either by salvaging it from empty buildings or, in some cases, cutting down trees themselves and working the wood with old-fashioned hand tools and the techniques they'd learned from local artisans. As a result, their fellow students began referring to them as "the carpenters"—Los Carpinteros, in Spanish—and the name stuck.

But Los Carpinteros's decision in 1994 to eschew individual authorship and to sign all of their artworks as a collective also rested on what was a shared and articulated conviction that art always, to some degree or another, involves a measure of collaboration. And that collaboration might take physical as well as intellectual, and/or conceptual form.

Los Carpinteros's
Tarima Lunar, 2010, a
collaborative drawing
inspired by Cuban
architecture and craft.

"Even a painter who says he spends all his time alone in his studio, making work that he says is entirely his own it's not true," Rodríguez points out, speaking from the collective's studio in Madrid. where they now reside. "There is always a web of influences, of knowledge, of history, even of something as simple as supplies. Nothing exists alone, in art or anywhere else. It's a matter of practical necessity."

In the later 1990s, Los Carpinteros developed a distinctive style that centered on collective paintings, drawings, and sculptures, and derived its visual vocabulary from Cuban architectural and vernacular imagery, which the artists often treated with an oblique irreverence. This period coincided with Cuba's opening up to the West, with a consequent inflow of tourism revenue. The trio's work, which appeared in various editions of the Havana Biennial, began to be noticed by international curators visiting Cuba.

Los Carpinteros had their first show outside of Cuba in 1995, at London's Whitechapel Gallery, in the exhibition "New Art from Cuba," and were later included in the group show "Domestic Partnerships," at Art in General in New York in 1996.

But the work that definitively launched Los Carpinteros onto the international art-world stage was *Ciudad Transportable* (Transportable City), a large-scale installation presented at the 7th Havana Biennial in 2000. It was to become key to their subsequent career and much of their later work.

Ciudad Transportable consists of ten white nylon tents stretched over aluminum frames. The tents are models of basic building types—church, factory,



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Güiro, 2012, an art-bar installation presented at Art Basel Miami, was inspired by the güiro, a Cuban percussion instrument made from the shell of a tropical fruit.

hospital, apartment building—and were based on existing structures in Havana, such as the Capitol (which was modeled on the U.S. Capitol building) and one of the nation's infamous prisons, Presidio Modelo.

With its participatory element—visitors could stroll freely in and out of the tents—and its contingent architectural character, *Ciudad Transportable* easily fit in with international art currents of the moment. Meanwhile, on a formal level, especially in terms of craft, it earned comparison with the work of Donald Judd and Richard Artschwager. But, at the same time, it related to issues specific to Cuba, such as the deteriorating architectural infrastructure, refuge, and even survival.

Ciudad Transportable later traveled widely (and appropriately, given its format and subject matter) to a variety of venues, such as MoMA P.S.1, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Contemporary Museum, Honolulu (now part of the Honolulu Museum of Art), and the Shanghai Biennale. And in the process, Los Carpinteros, with their Cuban-inflected and idiosyncratic blend of art, architecture, and design, became

fixtures on the international art scene.

"What distinguishes them," says Helen Molesworth, chief curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, "is the way they have a rigorous engagement with historical ideas of utopianism that they combine with a late-20th-century sense of humor." She adds, "Instead of seeing those social experiments as failures, writing them off, capitulating to cynicism, they are quite energetically engaged."

ver the years Los Carpinteros's work has varied in format and subject matter. But it has at its core the large-scale watercolor and gouache drawings for which they are arguably best known. Realist—often even surreal—renderings of objects, their drawings are intricately related to and often presage their three-dimensional work. In addition, the drawings, which the artists say they execute together, function as a way for them to communicate their ideas to each other: "they are the letters we write to each other," Castillo says.

The team's sculptures and sculptural installations operate similarly. For instance, a work like *Sala de Lectura* (Reading Room), 2010, derives its form from the architectural panopticon (often used historically in prison design, including in Havana) but the artists transform it





into a set of intricately assembled wood bookshelves that curve into an enclosed space for reading and storing books. And a recent set of sculptures replicates wildly utopian Soviet buildings, such as the 1964 Monument to the Conquerors of Space, into sculptural models constructed out of Legos. In these works furniture and architecture are reversed, while weighty historical concepts are simultaneously upended and skewered.

"Their work is remarkably complex and lavered," says Ian Berry, director of the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, where Los Carpinteros had a solo exhibition in 2010. "First you see one thing in it. Then you see another thing. It really rewards repeated viewing." And, he adds, "it has humor, but it's also provocative; it's poking fun, but all out of a sense of being careful cultural critics. Mixing humor and cultural criticism is a great way of getting their message across."

For Lisa Freiman, senior curator of contemporary art at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, their work is "fantastical, unexpected, intelligent, monumental in its ambition and intention, playful, and inherently surrealistic in sensibility." She adds, "The huge, intricate, and delicate watercolors function much like Claes Oldenburg's early Proposed Monuments Drawings, as propositions for things that could be built, an archive of ideas for future projects."

As in Surrealism and

Dada, the visual puns in the art of Los Carpinteros tend to be structured on incongruous or even impossible juxtapositions, such as a bed that doubles as a roller coaster in La Montaña Rusa (2008) and the propeller plane riddled with arrows in Avión (2011). Such offbeat humor allows the artists to be political without being militant, and to offer subtle critiques rather than fullfledged condemnations. And while they don't necessarily intend everyone to get their jokes—"That would be a luxury," says Castillo—they do see a serious underside to their playful distortions of man-made objects.

OPPOSITE Free Basketball-the same (vista superior), 2010, a watercolor study for a sculptural installation created for the Indianapolis Museum of Art's Art & Nature Park (top). La Montaña Rusa, 2008, a surrealistic piece that doubles as a roller-coaster and a bed (bottom). ABOVE Kosmaj Toy, 2012, wittily replicating a utopian Soviet building, is composed of Legos.

In person, Castillo and Rodríguez are affable and upbeat. They habitually finish each others' sentences, like a long-married couple—a comparison they themselves are the first to make. Today, after years of travel from Cuba to their many exhibitions worldwide, Castillo and Rodríguez have settled in Madrid (the city was chosen largely because, as descendents of Spaniards, they were entitled to legal residence in

> Spain) with their respective families—both Castillo and Rodríguez are married and have small children. They also maintain a base and studio in Havana. Their Madrid workspace is located in a large, lightfilled industrial building in a working-class neighborhood populated mostly by immigrants from Latin America. Today, the building is largely empty, testifying to Spain's precarious economy.

> orking fulltime in Europe has opened new possibilities for the highend fabrication of their work, say the artists, who also appreciate Madrid for its clarity of light and the high-speed Internet access that would have been unimaginable in Cuba.

> "Like many artists, they began modestly, and then grew in scale as they had more opportunities," Molesworth explains. "But they didn't get big just for big's sake. They've managed to straddle the boundary

between sculpture and architecture with great success."

They are now represented by Sean Kelly Gallery in New York, where their prices range from between €13,000 and €48,000 for works on paper, and €15,000 and €150,000 for sculptures and installations.

Observes Berry, "As specific as their work is to the Cuban context, it also transcends that context." He explains, "It belongs to the wider recent history of drawing, for instance. Or to the recent history of playing with translation and mistranslation. Or with art that demands interaction with its public."

# The New World of Net Art

Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, Vine, and other platforms are the jumping-off point for artists who blur the line between the virtual and the real

BY CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

# Over the course of three months in 2011,

a group of students at the University of California, Berkeley, regularly logged on to their Facebook accounts

to post updates about what they were doing. Things got messy fast. They used the social media service to arrange trysts on campus and off. Pictures of out-of-control parties soon materialized—including images of new pledges being water-boarded at a campus fraternity. More online uproars ensued when it was discovered that one of the university's top athletes was connected to a violent drug cartel.

OK, not really. Dorm Daze was a performance piece staged on Facebook by British artist Ed Fornieles. It featured dozens of fictional characters and an array of subplots. Fornieles played the role of an aggressive frat guy dating the campus sorority queen. The other roles math nerds, goth kids, and the basketball star/meth dealer—were inhabited by friends and acquaintances. The largely improvised storylines moved forward every time someone posted a status update. "It was like narrative on crack—it kept escalating," Fornieles recalls. "As an artist, that's what I'm interested in:

that moment in which a piece just takes off and mutates in ways you could never imagine."

In many aspects, *Dorm Daze* represents the Internet art of the moment—taking a prominent media platform and subverting it. The project encompasses a variety of other

mediums. Fornieles has built sculptural frat-house sets for rowdy Happenings connected to the online narratives. Physical objects from these events then get repurposed as sculptures, which he displays in galleries. (Fornieles is represented

as sculptures, which he displays in galleries. (Fornieles is represented by Carlos/Ishikawa in London, where his pieces sell in the range of \$5,000 to \$17,000. In July, he will have a show of new works at Mihai Nicodim Gallery in Los Angeles.) "A piece of carpet might be covered with an elaborate mixture of fake blood and vomit, and it becomes this incredible wall piece," he says. "It's much more loaded than anything I could make."

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Stephan Backes's 1st Come, 1st Served (Limited Edition), 2012, a signed and numbered digital painting that collectors can download from the Light & Wire Gallery website.

When Internet art first emerged

in the early 1990s, it was regarded as something that dealt almost exclusively with the architecture of the World Wide Web itself. During that period, the German-born Wolfgang Staehle constructed *The Thing*, an electronic bulletin board system that served as a forum for discussions about and dissemination of what was referred to as "net art." In 1998, British artist Heath Bunting produced a Web text titled *\_readme.html*, in which every word links to a website that employs that same word as its

URL—an abstract way of getting at ownership of ideas online. And the Dutch-Belgian duo known as JODI (Joan

Carolina A. Miranda is an independent journalist based in Los Angeles. She blogs at C-Monster.net.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP JODI'S 2008 Web work *GEOGOO* riffs on Google Maps. A still of Yoshi Sodeoka's *A Candle and A Moose Head* from "The Shortest Video Art Ever Sold," 2013. John Baldessari's app In Still Life 2001–2010 lets users manipulate a 350-year-old Dutch painting.





A video still of Joe Hamilton's *Hyper Geography*, 2011 (above). Fernanda Viégas and Martin Wattenberg's *Wind Map*, 2012 (below).



Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) created such iconic works as wwwwwwww.jodi.org, a website made in 1995 that appears to be nothing but garbled alphanumeric symbols until the viewer clicks through to the programming code, which is written in the shape of an atomic bomb. (The site is still up.)

But as the Web has evolved, so too has the notion of what might be considered Internet art. "I think it's much harder to define than it was in the mid-1990s," says Christiane Paul, adjunct curator of new-media arts at the Whit-

ney Museum and a follower of the form since its earliest days. "We are looking at something that is becoming more hybrid. Pieces often have different manifestations: an application, a net-based piece, an installation." For Fornieles, who divides his time between London and Los Angeles, going from the virtual to the physical is simply representative of the way he thinks. "I studied sculpture, but I like moving from one medium to another. Why shouldn't the work I make reflect a bit of that ADD mentality?'

Even artists who aren't known for working on the Internet have put a toe in the arena. Three years ago, L.A. Conceptualist John Baldessari collaborated with the organization ForYourArt to produce In Still Life 2001–2010, an app that allows users to create their own renditions of Abraham van Beyeren's 1667 painting Banquet Still Life. "What I like about these types of commissions," says Baldessari, "is that they give you the ability to do something that you don't nor-

mally do." In this case, that's digitally rearranging the fruits and shellfish in a historic Dutch work of art.

There is also now a surfeit of digitally minded venues —both virtual and physical. Light & Wire Gallery, based in L.A., and the Super Art Modern Museum, in France, host curated projects solely online. In March, a gallery called Transfer opened a brick-and-mortar space in Brooklyn, focusing on artists who keep one foot firmly planted in the digital world. And this past spring the Moving Image art fair in New York featured a project called "The Shortest Video Art Ever Sold," curated by Marina Galperina and Kyle Chayka. It consisted of 22 different six-second works by various artists, all created on the Twitter-owned app Vine, where users share bite-size videos. One of the pieces, Tits on Tits on Ikea (2013), by Angela Washko, sold to a Dutch curator for \$200. The

earnings may have been small, but the video generated a flurry of press coverage for being the first Vine-made work to sell on the commercial art market.

Moreover, there has been significant movement at the institutional level. The Whitney has been commissioning net art for its website for more than a decade. This spring, in fact, JODI created a 30-second animation that pops up on the site every day at sunrise and sunset. In addition, nonprofit organizations, such as Eyebeam Art+Technology Center and Rhizome (an affiliate of the

> New Museum), serve as important art-tech incubators.

Rhizome's annual "Seven on Seven" conference pairs seven prominent artists and seven technologists for creative brainstorming sessions that can result in unusual works of art. At last year's conference, photographer Taryn Simon and the late Internet activist Aaron Swartz created *Image Atlas*, a tool that sorts online image searches by country. "It's so elegant," says Heather Corcoran, executive director of Rhizome. "It allows you to compare how a word like 'freedom' might be visually represented in the United States

versus China or Brazil."

Our cultural landscape is now rife with references to digital visualizations, such as pixelization or the plastic colors and stiff lines of digital rendering. And the boundary between the "virtual" and the "real" is often blurred. Last year at South by Southwest, artist, writer, and technologist James Bridle dubbed the phenomenon the New Aesthetic, a term that has since gone viral.

In art, this way of seeing has manifested itself in innumerable ways. Melbourne artist Joe Hamilton collages digital graphics and video footage—as seen in his popular Web piece *Hyper Geography*, from 2011—to create filmic landscapes that feel both synthetic and disconcertingly real. Montreal-based Jon Rafman has a photographic series based on images he appropriates from the Street View feature on Google Maps. He combs the service in search of unusual slices of street life-arrests, brawls, a butterfly in flight—and then displays these on his Tumblr blog. Rafman also generates prints that he shows in galleries. (He is represented by Zach Feuer in New York, where his works sell for up to \$20,000.) "He's exploring the real as a virtual space," says Rhizome curator and editor Michael Connor. "It's very much a product of modern technology."



Taryn Simon and Aaron Swartz's Image Atlas, 2012, sorts online image searches by country. Shown are various results for the keyword "love."

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The culture that has grown up around the Web is also regularly de- and reconstructed. In the Internet-art version of institutional critique, many artists strive to sabotage the corporate platforms that are now active parts of our daily life. Bridle has used the photo-sharing service Instagram to post images of drone-strike zones in the Middle East. On Twitter, Lithuanian artist Laimonas Zakas (better known by the pseudonym Glitchr) uses gaps in the social network's code to create texts that bleed digital gibberish all over the screen. Facebook demands that users register with their real identities, a rule that Fornieles and his crew violated when they staged their collegiate soap opera.

The Web, in fact, has lent itself to parodic intervention from its earliest days. Eva and Franco Mattes are New York—based Italian artists who have worked together since 1994 and sometimes use the alias 0100101110101101.org. The duo once invented a reclusive Yugoslavian artist named Darko Maver, a figure who received all kinds of media coverage and inclusion in the Italian Pavilion at the 48th Venice Biennale, in 1999, before he was revealed to be fictional.

In 2010, the Matteses staged a fake online suicide and recorded the reactions to it on Chatroulette, a service that allows random users to connect via webcam. Some viewers giggled at the sight of the hanging man; evidently, only one called the police. "Every time a new medium is born we tend to perceive it as being more real than its predecessor," the couple states over e-mail. "For example, we View feel and the police of the hanging man; evidently, only one called the police. "Every time a new medium is born we tend to perceive it as the artist to uple states over e-mail. "For example, we

take for granted that people on TV reality shows are acting, or at least self-aware, while we assume that a kid making online videos is authentic. In our works we exploit a bit of this deep-rooted trust."

The vastness of the online world is such that some

The vastness of the online world is such that some artists have taken to building new tools for viewing it, as is the case with Simon and Swartz's image-search engine. Projects of this nature have included Mark Napier's Shredder 1.0—a piece that reconfigures, or "shreds," the text on any given website—and dump.fm, a fast-moving image chat room designed by art-technologist Ryder Ripps. For his 2010 work riverthe.net, video artist Ryan Trecartin, along with several collaborators, created a site that endlessly streams ten-second videos uploaded by users. It's a frenetic peek into the Web's oddest corners, a way of decontextualizing and reframing Internet imagery.

As with a lot of business done on the Web, net art is not without its commercial challenges. How do you convince a collector to pay for a piece that has been place.

convince a collector to pay for a piece that has been electronically "shared" several thousand times? "It's a miniscule market," says Magdalena Sawon of Postmasters, a gallery that has supported tech-driven projects since its

founding in the mid-1980s. Sawon has had great success selling prints, installations, and videos, but she has never sold a piece that resides purely online. (Postmasters represents the Matteses, as well as Wolfgang Staehle—both of whose works run in the \$10,000 to \$50,000 range.) "When we

Jon Rafman's 17 Skweyiya Street, East London, South Africa, 2010, an archival print of an image that the artist extracted from the Street View feature of Google Maps.





did some of the early shows that featured net artists in the '90s, I thought it would take a year or two and everyone would be on board with the idea of Internet art," Sawon says. "Well, here we are 17 years later."

Acquisitions at the institutional level also remain slow. The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis maintains numerous online works as part of a commissions project called "ada 'web," which includes pieces by the likes of Jenny Holzer, but none of these works are part of the museum's permanent collection. The Whitney has only a single net-art piece (The World's First Collaborative Sentence from 1994, by Douglas Davis), as does the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Fernanda B. Viégas and Martin Wattenberg's Wind Map, on view in the exhibition "Applied Design" through January). "What is important to me is the art history we are writing," says Whitney curator Paul. "This is work that is in dialogue with other things in the art world. We are writing a very strange art history if we don't consider it, if we don't bring it to the museum space."

The lack of marketability, however, doesn't mean that artists are staying away from the Internet. They are simply finding ways to innovate. Rafaël Rozendaal is a New York artist who does installation work as well as pop-inflected net-art pieces like *mechanicalwater.com*. His tactic has been to create a brand-new website for each work, which he then sells to collectors for \$4,900. These pieces—i.e. *colorflip.com* or *intotime.org*—remain publicly viewable online but the ownership and maintenance of the site are

An installation view of Rafaël Rozendaal's Into Time with Mirrors at the São Paulo Museum of Image and Sound, part of last year's Nova Festival.

transferred to the buyer. Rozendaal says he has sold more than two dozen of these works, likening the process to owning a piece of public art. "Here, the experience is both private and public," he says. (For his physical installations, Rozendaal is represented by Steve Turner Contemporary in Los Angeles, where his works sell for up to \$14,000.)

Rozendaal isn't the only one cultivating his own collector base. Young-Hae Chang and Marc Voge are the multimedia artists behind Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, based in Korea. They produce stripped-down text animations of poetry set to musical scores. These are often fast-paced and funny, in a simple oversize font (Monaco), with stream-of-consciousness language that is right off the Web. Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries does not have gallery representation, but the duo does sell works to collectors in a variety of digital formats. "We're in a brave new world here," they write in an e-mail from Seoul. "Artists have always been inventors, and today's digital lifestyle invites us to be just as inventive in determining not only what constitutes an artwork, but what constitutes its delivery system."

Even as their profile grows—their pieces have been transformed into elaborate video installations in institutions like the Pompidou Center in Paris—Voge and Chang have no intention of giving up the Web. They keep the majority of their work online, in several languages, viewable to anyone with a working modem. "We began our career by making Internet art," they note. "We love our website."

# CABINETSOF



ne of the few pre-assembled things that IKEA offers is its quaint creation myth. In a small Swedish village in 1943, an industrious, dyslexic teenager named Ingvar Kamprad—moving up in the world from selling matches, flower seeds, and Christmas decorations to his neighbors—founded a furniture store. Fast-forward through decades of growth, and Kamprad's concept has taken on mammoth proportions: hundreds of stores worldwide attracted 776 million customer visits last year, according to IKEA's annual report, and the company printed more than 212 million copies of its 2013 catalogue. (For some perspective, A Tale of Two Cities, believed to be the bestselling novel of all time, has sold somewhere over 200 million copies—since 1859.)

In Guy Ben-Ner's video
Stealing Beauty, 2007, the
artist and his family pretend
to live in IKEA showrooms in
a spoof on American sitcoms.

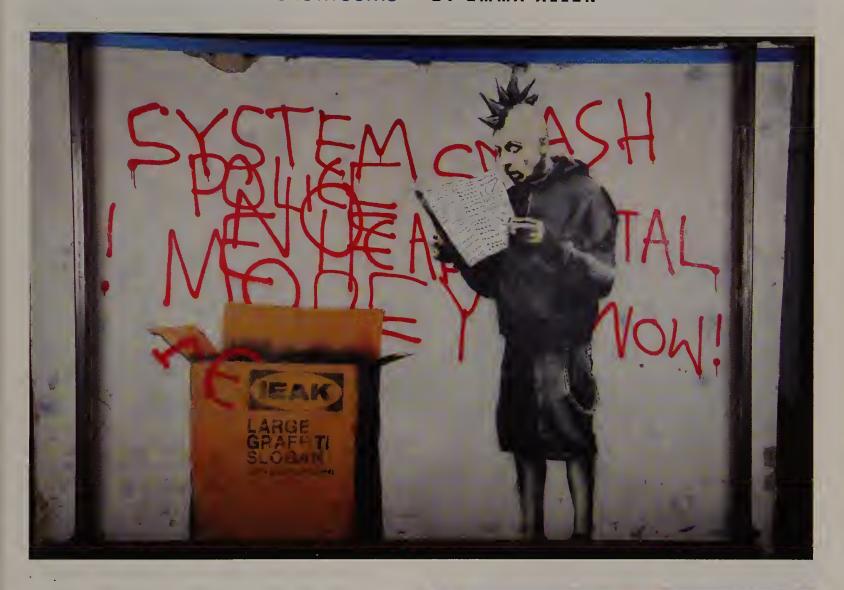
Parallel to this story is the emergence of visual artists who incorporate IKEA's esthetic into their work, literally and conceptually restructuring IKEA designs. The list of artists is long. There's Clay Ketter, Andrea Zittel, and the late Jason Rhoades,

whose reworkings of IKEA products appeared in the 1990s. Since then, as the company expanded across the globe—its store openings inciting shopper stampedes, its confounding assembly instructions reducing couples and college freshmen to tears—artists have tried everything from building coffins out of IKEA bookshelves (Joe Scanlan) to motorizing IKEA furniture into kinetic sculpture (Jeff Carter). Banksy's *IKEA Punk*, featuring a young mohawked man and a cardboard box that reads "IEAK Large Graffiti Slogan," was originally

# CURIOSITIES

Artists are finding inspiration in the distinctive esthetic of IKEA's furniture and showrooms

BY EMMA ALLEN



spray-painted in 2009 on a concrete wall near the Croydon, South London, IKEA store and has since been "salvaged" by New York's Keszler Gallery. Banksy's mural IKEA Punk, 2009 (above). Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy's installation The Cordial Home Project, 2003 (right), made from the flat-packed remnants of a demolished house.

But why does the IKEA brand appeal to such a wide range of artists? The reasons (from pure availability to sociopolitical allegory) are as varied as the works in question. Guy Ben-Ner—who, for his 2007 video *Stealing Beauty*, shot an "American family sitcom" in IKEA

Emma Allen is a member of the editorial staff of the New Yorker.



showrooms across the United States, Germany, and Israel without the company's permission says that IKEA's in-store displays remind him of "reality as an imitation of a sitcom set."

He became interested in IKEA for the ways in which the company's success highlights the globalization of taste. "For instance, you can have the same food—say, McDonald's—or the same desk in the U.S.A., in Germany, or in Japan," Ben-Ner says. "The phenomenon is very much apparent nowadays with reality shows being the same in many countries. Differences are being erased, suggesting a cinematic world with no major continuity problems."

hotographer and digital artist Koya Abe similarly used IKEA stores as the backdrop for the manipulated photographs in his series "Digital Art Chapter 3: Display," which places famous subjects, excised from classical portraits, in IKEA showrooms (e.g., Hyacinthe Rigaud's 1701 likeness of Louis XIV reaching for a stainless-steel refrigerator in a sleek modern kitchen). For Abe, the project is about "transmitting an ideal version of one's own image," whether by sit-

ting for a flattering portrait with one's finest trappings or by frequenting a store that "presents highly designed objects and spaces that ingeniously reflect the consumer's desire to enhance his or her perception of self-image."

It's not only the spaces but also IKEA products that artists have co-opted for their work. Ronald T. Labaco, a senior curator at New York's Museum of Arts and Design, attributes the profusion of IKEA-based art to the company's global scale, as well as to the increasing popularity of the do-it-yourself approach. "It's this idea of disposability and lack of long-term investment in IKEA products that has contributed to artists and designers using IKEA items," he says, citing the "assemble-it-yourself associations, the minimalist esthetic of some pieces—which provides a canvas for artistic invention—and the low cost," as top draws.

For the artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset, IKEA furniture has often been the most practical choice for installations and performances. Ingar Dragset says that they selected IKEA chairs, bar stools, and tables for pieces such as *Queer Bar/Powerless Structures*, Fig. 121 (2005), Re-g(u)arding the Guards (2005), and 24/7/365 (2009) because "for us, it is the simplicity that is appealing."

"Sometimes we need a chair that simply looks like a







Adriana Valdez Young fashioned a dress and a bikini top from IKEA's blue-tarp shopping bags (left). Jeff Carter modified several IKEA products to build *Unititled #1* (Chicago Tribune Tower), 2009 (above).

chair. It is hard to find that kind of generic furniture that does not have particular design elements and isn't outrageously expensive," the artist explains. "There is, of course, a sort of underlying Protestant shame and bad consciousness and Social Democratic mediocrity in the aim and rationale of a lot of Scandinavian design." Dragset says that the duo aims to subvert this "fear of ornament and emotion, of diversity and individuality, and so on by embedding Nordic design into situations and environments that talk about identity issues, desire and the body, and social issues."

ustralian artists Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro also see the IKEA esthetic as a kind of "short-hand" for larger sociopolitical topics like "globalism, mass production, movement, uniformity, and language," they note in a joint e-mail. The couple took flat-packing—a process that has become integral to IKEA's global logistics—to new heights with *The Cordial Home Project* (2003), for which they demolished a house and "stacked it into what resembled a giant lasagna block, from the foundations to the rooftop, in an order that could be notionally reassembled."

If such a house were ever to be rebuilt, perhaps its



inhabitants would wear the creations of Adriana Valdez Young, who refashions IKEA's softer products into "absurd lifestyle objects," includKoya Abe, After Louis XIV, 2005 (above). Elmgreen & Dragset, Queer Bar/Powerless Structures, Fig. 121, 2005 (right).

ing dresses made from the store's big blue Frakta shopping bags, sheepskin-rug purses, and salad-tosser skirts.

The Frakta bag has proven particularly useful for Young, whether for lugging props to photo shoots or for doing her laundry. "But how many IKEA bags would it take to pack all of the contents of an average American home?" she asks. "The IKEA Frakta blue-tarp bag is an icon of our global consumer lifestyle and the excess consumption this entails."

To combat this entails.

To combat this impulse for immoderation, the artist began shedding her possessions, to the point that when she moved from Brooklyn a couple years ago, all of her belongings fit into two Fraktas. "And you know what? One of the first things I did when I got to London was to go to IKEA and buy all the basics I needed to restart my home," Young says. "They fit in exactly two IKEA bags. So now the footprint of my possessions is equal to four IKEA bags. I can feel like this is an accomplishment."



### reviews

# 'Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity'

## **Metropolitan Museum of Art**

his show featured some of the most beloved Impressionist masterpieces and numerous rarely seen works, dating from 1860 to the mid-1880s. As the avantgarde movement of the day, Impressionism focused on the portrayal of contemporary life and fashion, illustrating on canvas the period's rapidly changing mores and styles. In this eight-gallery exhibition, paintings were displayed along with actual examples of the costumes and accessories inhabiting the paintings, and with works by society portraitists and genre painters, fashion magazines, and carte de visite photographs.

The effort to capture the look of the times was exemplified in three fullfigure paintings—Manet's Young Lady in 1866 (1866), Monet's Camille

(1866) and his Madame Louis Joachim Gaudibert (1868)—all brilliant renderings with vivid brushwork capturing the women's elusive presence. Ironically, these pictures were hung next to gorgeous hyperrealistic society portraits by academic painters Carolus-Duran and Tissot, whose paintings were the very kind the Impressionists were rebelling against.

In another room, the two surviving fragments of Monet's monumental *Luncheon on the Grass* (1865–66) were united for the first time as the supreme example of plein air painting (an allusion to Manet's painting of the same name).



Claude Monet, *Luncheon on the Grass* (central panel), 1865–66, oil on canvas, 164%" x 59".

Monet returned to the theme in Women in the Garden (1866). The frocks on view here illustrated the vogue for cotton pique dresses with black scrollwork embroidery that appears in such paintings as Frédéric Bazille's Family Reunion (1867) and Gustave Courbet's pioneering Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine (Summer), 1856–57. The Courbet, describing two reclining, unbuttoned lovelies, was amplified by displays of corsets and other undergarments.

Elsewhere, white summer dresses and parasols reflected such works as Renoir's Lise (Woman with Umbrella), 1867, and Manet's portrait of Berthe Morisot in

Repose (ca. 1871), while black dresses linked both mourning and urbanity, as seen in Manet's elegant La Parisienne (ca. 1875). The concept of the show truly came alive with Albert Bartholomé's portrait of his wife, In the Conservatory (Madame Bartholomé), ca. 1881. The dress she is wearing in the painting was displayed as if it had stepped out of the canvas.

The theme of fashion is urban, and Caillebotte's Paris Street; Rainy Day (1877), gave the stark perspective of the wide new boulevards, while other images spread across Paris's parks, churches, salons, and theaters, as seen in a row of paintings that included Renoir's La Loge (1874) and Mary Cassatt's In the Loge (1878) and Woman with a Pearl Necklace in a Loge (1879).

Men in black frock coats were also highlighted as in Fantin-Latour's portrait of Manet and Bazille's of the young Renoir. A group portrait by Tissot presents elegant men in *The Circle* of the Rue Royale (1868), with Charles Haas, the original for Proust's Charles Swann.

This brilliant exhibition, organized by the Met, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Musée d'Orsay, teased the everyday concerns from the paintings by bringing into focus the fleeting manifestations of an age—fans, shoes, lingerie, dresses—revealing the period's genius in uniting artistic, intellectual, social, and decorative currents.

—Charles Ruas

# This just in: Web Exclusives

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# reviews: new york

# George Bellows

### **Metropolitan Museum of Art**

George Bellows (1882–1925) is known to most people for a painting of two almost naked men trying to kill each other. *Stag at Sharkey's* (1909) greeted visitors to this exhibition and proved that it still has the power to shock.

Less well known but also shocking in their own way are Bellows's paintings of the Pennsylvania Station excavation that began in 1904. This eight-acre pit in the eye into its depths and makes you shudder. A bonfire throwing out sparks in the foreground seems to mark an entrance to the underworld.

Bellows avoided many of the usual New York subjects, as Corcoran Gallery of Art curator Sarah Newman points out in her catalogue essay. He was drawn to the industrial waterfront, where there is always a glimpse of a bridge and the smoke from a passing boat. *Men of the Docks* (1912) has it all—and more: laborers waiting to be hired, a towering ocean

Children. But it's the early portraits, Frankie, the Organ Boy (1907) and Paddy Flannigan (1908), that deliver the most.

Views of the Maine coast also abounded. It's a surprise that Bellows painted so many—more than 500, according to Corcoran curator and catalogue essayist Sarah Cash. They show the artist constantly experimenting, absorbing various influences, going some distance toward pure abstraction but never venturing all the way. Two late pictures, *The White Horse* (1922) and *The Picnic* 



George Bellows, Pennsylvania Excavation, 1907, oil on canvas, 33%" x 44".

middle of Manhattan sparked a national debate and dominated the popular media. It was a subject so modern that it was news, but Bellows chose to memorialize it in the most traditional medium, oil on canvas.

These dramatic paintings of the excavation are curiously devoid of people. Machines spew steam and smoke, but workers are few, and not much seems to be happening. The subject isn't progress or the heroism of labor but the primeval earth itself. The gleaming black hole in *Excavation at Night* (1908) draws your

liner with an arch of the Brooklyn Bridge barely visible behind it, and, across the river, the (geographically misplaced) skyscrapers of Manhattan.

Bellows's early pictures are so powerful that his later works are a letdown. He painted portraits throughout his career, and they occupied a large space in the exhibition. His most frequent portrait subjects were the members of his family, particularly his wife and his two daughters. His 1923 portrait of them, *Emma and Her Children*, is a tense echo of Renoir's *Madame Georges Charpentier and Her* 

(1924), suggest an inclination toward visionary fantasy, which Bellows might have explored had he lived longer.

Bellows had a very successful career, but after his early death (at 42 of peritonitis), his place in American art gradually came to be confined to the period before the Armory Show. This exhibition (which also appeared at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Royal Academy of Arts in London) presented a convincing case for taking a broader view of the artist.

-Sylvia Hochfield

# Virginia Overton

### Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Ask gallery visitors what they most recall about Virginia Overton's sparse but memorable exhibition, and they would likely respond that it is the overwhelming scent of cedarwood. This is especially notable as smell is hardly the sense that one associates with a visit to an art gallery.

For her first show with the gallery, Overton covered the rear wall with lumber harvested from the trees on her family's farm in Tennessee. The wood planks, with their compelling grain patterns, readily invited contemplation, and suggested something painted—slowly and handsomely—by nature itself.

Untitled (Juniperus virginiana), all works 2013, resembled a fence or a floor or a barricade initially, but its graceful abstracted beauty, not to mention its comforting aroma, came to dominate the viewing experience. Overton often uses simple materials, such as wood, calling to mind economy, ingenuity, and physical labor.

Another artwork in the large gallery was *Untitled (hot tub)*, a rusty, cast-iron tub filled with water and connected by tubes to an ordinary, white drip coffeemaker that was plugged into the wall. Periodically, as the small machine completed its cycle (with water but no coffee) the apparatus became almost angry: the tubes sputtered and wiggled, steam rose and as the temperature of the water changed, clanks could be heard from

somewhere within the cast-iron basin. One could feel slight heat rising from the tub as water traveled up another tube and back to the coffeemaker, which set off to accomplish its humble, poetic Sisyphean task once again.

-Doug McClemont

# Rona Pondick

### Sonnabend

In this exquisite exhibition, Rona Pondick's sculptures, along with some delicately colored drawings, were a blend of the uncannily conceived and the meticulously handcrafted. Gleaming bronze and stainless-steel figures—sometimes lustrously painted, as in *Dwarfed White Jack* (2010–12)—conjured Gothic tales of Kafkaesque metamorphoses.

The show was elegantly installed throughout the several rooms of the gallery, with each fanciful work usually placed low and given enough space to cast its singular spell. Pondick's bizarre but beautiful hybridizing of her head, hands, and other body parts with a beaver, a wallaby, a prairie dog, trees, and pillows is something she has been



Rona Pondick, *Ginko* (detail), 2007–12, stainless steel, 57%" x 33%" x 41". Sonnabend.

doing since the late 1990s. It's an exploration of the connections between human and nonhuman manifestations of life that seems at once extremely personal and conceived from a critical distance. Pondick's images, after all, are not self-portraits, but abstractions with disquieting psychological reverberations; they paradoxically attract and repel, as in White Beaver (2009–11), where the human head, chin scraping the ground, is about half the size of the animal body. Another of Pondick's tactics is to unexpectedly shift the scale of her various, realistic components from life-size to tiny—some heads are so small they seem to be merely seeds—radically transforming the sculptures' meaning and impact.

Notable exceptions to the ground-bound works were *Gink*o (2007–12), a tree with hands for leaves, and *Head in Tree* (2006–8), a stainless-steel semblance of a tree, commandingly framed by the entryway at the rear of the gallery. Nested in the crux of latter's bare, candelabrum-like branches is a flawlessly smooth, silver head, its eyes shut, grieved or bemused by its altered state—or resigned. However interpreted, it was one of the most hauntingly poetic images in the show. —*Lilly Wei* 



Virginia Overton, *Untitled (hot tub)*, 2013, cast-iron tub, coffee maker, vinyl tubing, limestone, brick, 23" x 61" x 67". Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

# UP NOW

# David Hartt

# Studio Museum in Harlem *Through June 30*

A sense of proud amazement permeates David Hartt's sumptuous photographs and video (all 2011) documenting the former Chicago headquarters of the Johnson Publishing Company. The eleven-story building was designed by architect John W. Moutoussamy and hailed as a triumph of African American Modernism in the early 1970s. Hartt's pictures reveal that its offices remained a time capsule of that style and era—until last year, when JPC, publisher of the magazines Ebony and Jet, relocated to the top two floors of the Borg-Warner skyscraper. These cleverly cropped compositions zoom in on just the right details within the rooms to convey the spirit of the site.

For Archive, Hartt aimed his camera diagonally along a counter leading to a tribal statue perched on the far end. Textured wallpaper and a sleek wall clock appear in the background, but the only hint of an archive lies in the few boxes peeking over the counter. Test Kitchen II simply shows a close-up of a gold JPC logo painted on an interior window—the paint has chipped away at the edges, indicating that this emblem has seen better days. Overall, though, Hartt's images reveal that the spaces had been immaculately preserved for four decades, even while colors like orange and mauve fell out of favor.

Set to a jazzy soundtrack that goes

from mellow to ominous to uplifting, the 12minute video Stray Light fills in areas that are missing from the photos. We see the grandiose lobby, with its woodpaneled walls and polished floor: staff members meeting in a glass-enclosed conference room; a wellstocked kitchen with psychedelic wallpaper; samples of JPC's superb African-art collection; and bound issues of bygone publications such as Negro Digest, Hue, Tan, and Black Stars.

The video's ambiance extends into the screen-

ing room, which Hartt.has outfitted with honeycomb carpeting, a low-slung Knoll bench from the '70s, and a red aluminum sculpture that mimics the building's facade. All of this is a vivid remembrance of a place where black pride, ambitious publishing, and opulent design converged in the heart of Chicago.

—Trent Morse

# Wayne Gonzales

### **Paula Cooper**

In recent years, Wayne Gonzales has been producing a lot of dichromatic paintings of spectators at crowded events, based on found images or photos he shot himself. Only one such painting

made an appearance here: a blotchy rendition in teal and white acrylic depicting a tier of excited faces watching some unseen extravaganza. The subject matter is the throbbing crowd itself, a kind of living organism of shared experience and emotion. "You had to be there," the saying goes.



Wayne Gonzales, Untitled, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 72" x 72". Paula Cooper.

Gonzales gives us the "being" part but

In this show of untitled works from

2012 and 2013, the crowd painting of-

pointed the way to a dozen other large

canvases—all of them portraying auto-

mobiles packed into parking lots. Pre-

sumably, these cars, vans, trucks, and

SUVs are stationed outside some of the

same events that Gonzales's spectators

would be attending. But once again, Gon-

fered a starting place, as the leering faces

intentionally leaves out the "there."

zales gives us no context, just hoards of vehicles in impossibly cramped spaces. From far away, the work is starkly photorealistic. And yet, up close, it reveals bold painterly gestures: acrylic slathered on like finger paint, solid bands that transform into car frames, camouflage patterns that become windshield reflections. It's an exercise in pure tonality, in which contrasting hues collate into real objects in our gullible minds when we take a few steps back. Thankfully, the gallery was spacious enough to provide this full experience. The vehicles in one tawny-colored composition even faded in and out of transparency to connote constant motion and passing time.

These scenes might contain social commentary—cars are polluting, globalheating, antisocial wasters of space and natural resources—but Gonzales is so deadpan that it's hard to decipher how he really feels about the things he paints. He's more of a reporter than an editorialist, and all the more intriguing for it.

—Trent Morse



David Hartt, *Award Room*, 2011, archival pigment print mounted to Dibond and framed, 48" x 60". Studio Museum in Harlem.

# UP NOW

# Elizabeth Peyton

## Gavin Brown's enterprise Michael Werner Through June 15

Elizabeth Peyton's portraits of androgynous punk rockers, celebrities, friends, and opera stars are usually credited with presaging renewed critical interest in a type of painting that used to be dismissed as shallow. Peyton's sketchy portraits are enticing. However, they lack the tinge of irony found in the paintings of her contemporaries, such as John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage. She would often seem besotted with her subjects, who include Kurt Cobain, David Bowie, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Wagnerian tenor Jonas Kaufmann.

Peyton's oddly provocative work seems closer to the Italian portrait painter Giovanni Boldini than to Alice Neel—it reveals social status and attitude, not psychological traits. What saves Peyton's portraits is the very affectation exuded by her subjects. Her art appears to be more influenced by neuroscience—and particularly the "mirror neurons" in our brains that are triggered by the sight of faces, especially

Elizabeth Peyton, *Irises and Klara, Commerce St.*, 2012, oil on panel, 24" x 18". Michael Werner.

familiar ones—than by psychology. Peyton's portraits bear closer comparison with Karen Kilimnik's pictures of starry-eyed adolescents that first appeared a decade earlier.

At the entrance to Gavin Brown's enterprise there was a single small portrait

on each of four huge white walls. The installation made the paintings look important and established an unexpected sense of gravitas.

In the galleries that followed, a hawk-like profile of Peter Gelb, the Metropolitan Opera's general manager, stood out. So did an

almost abstract black-and-blue painting of the two male leads from *Brokeback Mountain*. There was also a tender Barack kissing Michelle on the nose, and Peyton's charming self-portrait with

> her dog Felix. The best work in this show was a barely there watercolor of the provocative artist Klara Liden.

Uptown at Werner it's all Klara all the time. She looks wary, pensive, or sad. "Klara 13 Pictures" includes monotypes, etchings, pencil drawings, oils, and one wonderfully pale watercolor of Klara along with a single inert still life of a vase filled with pink and red flowers.

We wonder whether Peyton's absence of irony represents a new tendency toward anti-cynicism, or whether naturalism is a new post-post-conceptual stance. Or is her work so utterly traditional that it might be considered a challenge to hipper, more conceptual forms of art?

-Kim Levin

# Danh Vo

### Guggenheim Museum and Marian Goodman

Danh Vo's international profile—born to Vietnamese parents, raised in Denmark, based in Germany—is mapped all over



Danh Vo, I M U U R 2, 2013, mixed media, installation view, dimensions variable. Guggenheim Museum.

his art. His works weave motifs and materials loaded with social, political, and cultural significance into provocative relationships that seem at once orthodox and subversive.

For his Hugo Boss Prize commission at the Guggenheim, IMUUR2 (2013), Vo assumed the role of artist-as-curator, presenting an orderly array of some 3,800 objects selected from the personal collection of the late painter Martin Wong. In one apparent homage to Pop art, Campbell Soup cans mingled with hot-sauce bottles; a shelf lined with salt and pepper shakers hosted Chinese porcelain combs, trolley cars, and hard-boiled eggs; and a gleaming assortment of Statue of Liberty miniatures shared space with Sun-Maid raisin boxes and ROTC army patches in an ostensible display of Americana. Vo's thoughtful arrangements of Wong's beloved curios, which ranged from cheesy souvenirs to rare calligraphic scrolls and ceramics, conflated the two artists' sensibilities in suggestive, and sometimes poignant, vignettes.

In "Mother Tongue" at Marian Goodman, Vo took the idea of exchange into darker territory. Most of the show's 34 items hailed from an auction of the personal effects of former secretary of defense Robert S. McNamara, who guided the United States into the Vietnam War.

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Though unremarkable in themselves, the objects were organized by Vo into unsettling juxtapositions that conjured subtly dissident alternative histories. Only on close inspection, for example, did viewers notice that Lot 20. Two Kennedy Administration Cabinet Room Chairs (2013) had been brutally disassembled: the chairs' bare wooden frames stood in separate corners, while the leather, muslin, twine, and nails were distributed elsewhere, piled on the floor or slung on the wall like carcasses of human flesh. Lot 11. Vietnam Photo Album, 1962 (2013) seemed like an innocent memento-but its inscription disclosed that it was gifted to McNamara "with the compliment of the Armed Forces of Vietnam."

-Emily Nathan

# 'Seven Sages of Ceramics'

### Joan B. Mirviss

The work of seven of Japan's finest modern ceramists was on artful display here. Tea bowls, plates, and sculptural objects were nestled in quiet nooks or perched on hand-hewn wooden pedestals. This lovely show focused on pieces from the mid-20th century by craftsmen who are not well known outside of Japan.

As embodied in their ceramics, the philosophies of these artisans could not be more different. Kitaôji Rosanjin (1883-1959) created Modernist functional tableware, which he used at his exclusive eating club in Tokyo. His leaf-



Kamoda Shôji, Undulating rounded gray and beige coloredclay vessel with raised floor, 1972, two-colored clay inlaid vessel with glazed interior, 5" x 8" x 814". Joan B. Mirviss.

shaped, silverglazed platter with colored dots (1958) suggests a painter's palette, and a dish of glazed stoneware —half mossgreen, half white with blue dashes (1960s)—calls to mind Matisse. Kitaôji intended both pieces to be usable objects. Likewise, his nearcontemporary Kawakita Handeishi (1878-1963) famously said he made his charming tea

bowls "in order to drink tea." In contrast, the younger Arakawa Toyozô (1894-1985) sculpted vessels for visual appeal that he never intended for use. In fact, some of his tea bowls have cracks in their bases, rendering them unusable.

A sea change took place after World War II, when a new generation of ceramists moved more decisively toward sculpture. A barrel-shaped stoneware piece with two cylindrical mouths (1956) by Yagi Kazuo (1918-79) conjures a creature from another planet, while his ceramic self-portrait (ca. 1940–50s), made with wormlike clumps of clay, speaks of mortality. Most striking of all were the bold works of Kamoda Shôji

> (1933-1983), functional vessels for those who insist on it, but mostly sculptural meditations on the nature of the Earth and of clay.

> > -Mona Molarsky

# John McLaughlin

### **Van Doren Waxter**

This serene exhibition featured five reductive oil paintings on Masonite made between 1947 and 1974 by pioneering California abstractionist John McLaughlin. After a period of living in Japan, the selftaught artist began painting



John McLaughlin, Untitled, 1951, oil on Masonite, 23¾" x 27¾". Van Doren Waxter.

in 1938. Working far from the East Coast Abstract Expressionist turmoil, McLaughlin was inspired by the Asian ideal of artworks as objects facilitating contemplation. His radically strippeddown, transcendent geometric works were crucial to the artistic development of later California artists including Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, and Robert Ryman.

The show's earliest painting, from 1947, hung alone in the entry gallery an opaque white biomorphic shape floating diagonally against a pale olive ground, covered by transparent red and gold rectangles. Pigment is thinly applied, allowing the canvas to show through, and the thin horizontal bars that preoccupied McLaughlin for years have already appeared in this work.

The four other paintings, two in black and white and two in color, each hung on their own wall in the second-floor parlor room. Overlapping shapes and contrasting textures have disappeared in the two works painted in 1951, replaced by simple hard-edged forms delineated in tenderly applied opaque oil paint. In one, a syncopated series of horizontal bars of varying width seem to push against one another, set off by a hovering circle in the upper left corner. In the other, an ivory stripe on the left and a green strip on the right seem to squeeze the black stripe between them, pushing forward a central pale blue disk.

By the time he created the show's final paintings, two years before he died, McLaughlin had abandoned spatial and

chromatic tensions. Both contain single horizontal rectangles carefully placed within contrasting grounds: one has a narrow black-and-ivory bar floating on a light brown ground, while the other, even plainer, has a long black rectangle on an ivory field. Freed from the tyranny of objects, viewers can lose themselves in uncluttered light and space—what McLaughlin called "the marvelous void." —Elisabeth Kley

# 'Edvard Munch: Early Works'

### John Szoke

Besides being a major painter, Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was one of the 20th century's great printmakers. His etchings and drypoints built on the traditions of the early masters, while his experimental woodcuts paved the way for the German Expressionists. Taken together, his body of graphic work remains an artistic revelation. This beautiful show offered the opportunity to get close to a dozen of Munch's prints, ranging from several drypoints he made in Berlin in the mid-1890s to images printed in Oslo near the end of World War I.

Much as a psychoanalyst might return to a series of dreams, trying to decipher their meaning, Munch reworked a group of images throughout his lifetime. Some were based on his memories of childhood. *The Sick Child* (1896), a lithograph in black and colored inks, was one of many explorations of his sister's death

from tuberculosis. In this print, the child's pale profile melts into a white pillow, and crimson streaks her damp hair, suggesting the blood of her illness. Munch based The Girls on the Bridge (1918), a woodcut with hand coloring, on a 1901 painting using the same theme. With its fiercely gouged lines and vertigo-inducing diagonals, the woodcut seems to pulsate with anxiety.

But Munch's work, especially in his early years, could be tender. One of his first prints, *Consolation* (1894), a drypoint in black ink, shows a naked teenage couple, perched on a bed, the

girl weeping, the boy gently wrapping his arms around her. Next to the girl sits a dark, mysterious presence, half sack of potatoes, half Goyaesque goblin. It's a haunting image that captures the birth of the modern era, as sex was being pried from the arms of sin by psychologists and poets. The spirits of Sigmund Freud and Henrik Ibsen seemed to hover just beyond the frame.

-Mona Molarsky



Edvard Munch, Consolation, 1894, drypoint, 8½" x 12½". John Szoke.



Hendrik Kerstens, Aluminum, 2012, pigment print, 40" x 30". Danziger.

# Hendrik Kerstens

### **Danziger**

Since 1994, Dutch photographer Hendrik Kerstens has used his daughter Paula as a subject, capturing her Dutch Golden Age–style features—porcelain skin, heavy-lidded blue eyes, and aquiline nose. He clothes her in varying curious garments and headdresses. The 17 huge pigment prints in this show together created a narrative arc rich with subtleties to sometimes unsettling effect.

Paula's austere pose in *Bubble Wrap* (2008) seems to counter the novelty of the translucent, air-packed headpiece that sets off her dewy, open face. But in *Paper Roll* (2008), she wears a sculptural headpiece built from what look like toiletpaper rolls, making her appear statuesque and solid. Her skin itself is matte, as if made of stone, recalling a Greco-Roman bust.

In these images, Paula is shown in different costumes but similar poses, all against a black background. By capturing the tiny variations on the wide canvas of her face, Kerstens isolates the process of aging in the young and beautiful. But in earlier works, the takeaway is wildly different: in *Sunburnt* (2001), Paula appears before a blue background, awkwardly

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hunched over with preteen sullenness.

A slightly eerie narrative ran through the show: the earliest photo, from 1994, depicted Paula standing on a chair in a swimsuit, her tiny body just fitting into the frame. In the next photo, from 1999, she is captured from the ribs up, her bare chest flat, notable because in later images, when puberty placed a boundary between her and her photographer father, she appears less exposed. In the classical depictions that followed, Kerstens captures Paula with a fuller chest, slightly parted lips, and a distant stare, adding to our understanding of the earlier images. -Ali Pechman

# Eric Zener

### **Gallery Henoch**

There were many paintings of placid figures above and below water in this fascinating exhibition. Eric Zener revels in the deep turquoises and phthalo blues native to seas and lakes. Yet, close examination reveals that the glowing hues of the water are seldom reflected in the figures' flesh tones. By painting figures that appear illuminated by tungsten light, rather than by light passing through water, Zener creates strange aquatic environments.

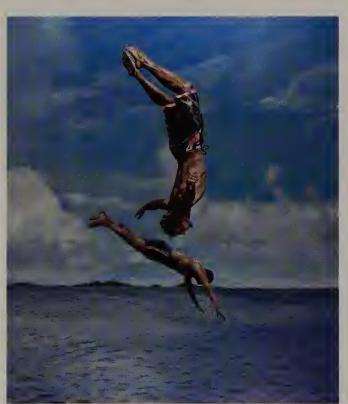
In *Friendship* (2013), two men plunge into the sea, their bodies creating a vertical and horizontal axis that completely halts the downward momentum of the

dive. They are modeled in warm umbers and painted in dramatic chiaroscuro. The woman in Outstretched (2013) glides across the bottom of a lake, passing through a viridian fog. Her skin is awash in warm and neutral hues rather than the soothing greens that envelop her. These bodies and environments do not seem to exist in the same space. The bands of color are inflected with different palettes of oranges and aquamarines, for example. Each figure and its surrounding scene has a separate color scheme.

The most unusual work here was *A Merging Into* (2012), which depicts the surface of water broken by two floating figures.

Almost conjoined at their crowns, the bodies drift symmetrically, reflecting each other at the center of the canvas, as if in mirror image. Fragments of peach ripple away from the bodies and fade into the water. Zener establishes a puzzling tension among man, woman, and the vast expanses of sky and ocean.

-Greg Lindquist



Eric Zener, Friendship, 2013, oil on canvas, 82" x 74". Gallery Henoch.

# Jane Lafarge Hamill

### J. Cacciola

Jane Lafarge Hamill's exhibition "Emoticon" consisted of mostly half-length portraits, some depicted frontally, others painted in profile or from behind. This installation was dazzling and kaleidoscopic. Hamill was able to express her ideas about the limits of expression by abstracting the portrait.

As such, her pictures share an emotional distance with the expressive shorthand of the emoticon. The faces of many of the figures



Jane Lafarge Hamill, Hawaii, 2013, oil on canvas, 27" x 22". J. Cacciola.

were absent, painted out, or otherwise obfuscated. While the emoticon commonly provides context or tone for quickly written communication, it also creates a cool and ironic detachment from its original expression. Similarly, rather than describing a straightforward countenance, Hamill's canvases find an emotional intensity in a style of painting that nearly obliterates any facial indication. This was most extreme in the wistfully titled *Summer Cicada Opera* (2012), in which Hamill raked colorful layers of pigment across a vague silhouette, calling to mind a futurist cyborg.

At the entrance to the show were portraits hung over a photographic wall-paper depicting crumbling warehouses in Leipzig, near where Hamill had recently completed a residency. An artist's book she produced for this exhibition displayed photographs of the paintings installed in these decayed buildings, where grafitti and broken glass had similar palettes to those of the paintings. Given this charged environment, the photos in the artist's book were more direct and affecting than the installation in the gallery.

In *Hawaii* (2013), for example, another cyborg-like abstraction was hung on a faded salmon-painted brick wall in a warehouse interior, and *Summer Cicada Opera* was placed on a glowing fluorescent

mound of splintered glass. Here, it became clear how the crumbling atmosphere of postwar Germany influenced the abstraction developing in her paintings.

-Greg Lindquist

# Susan Wides

### **Kim Foster**

For her latest exhibition of color photographs of New York, Susan Wides, like a tourist on a return visit, explored the city's lesser-known and farther-out attractions. Her previous show at the gallery featured lush, selective-focus images shot from above, including views of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center. These recent photographs recorded, with the same

airy grace, scenes ranging from Coney Island to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Viewed together, the series called to mind the children's books of Richard Scarry, in which viewers are encouraged to sift through urban crowds and ponder the role of each individual in the life of the city as a whole.

In Macy's [December 8, 2012], among the crush of people and handbags that stretches to the horizon, a few individuals stand out—a skinny clerk rushing across the floor, a blond in a leopard-

print coat. Across the East River at the Brooklyn Flea, the indoor vintage market held in an old bank lobby, the crowd is slightly scruffier. Someone shuffles through bins of art while someone carries home an oversize letter "M." And below a haze of yellow leaves, Zuccotti Park [November 17, 2011] shows the area cleared of Occupy Wall Street protesters but still surrounded by tiny figures with signs and tiny figures astride motorcycles.

In a few images, the city seems to have emptied,



Susan Wides, *Zuccotti Park* [November 17, 2011], pigmented ink print, 50" x 46". Kim Foster.

and Wides catches those who are left in enigmatic arrangements. A flock of softly blurred seagulls fills the frame in *Coney Island [September 21, 2012]*. At one edge of the beach is a couple who could pass as bride and groom—a woman in white holds a bouquet and her companion in a suit and tie carries a large cup. Behind them in the distance, a Hasidic man in a dark suit crosses the sand with five young children, as if a scene from the couple's future.

-Rebecca Robertson



David Deutsch, Sunset, 2012, acrylic paint on linen, 38" x 50". Feature Inc.

# David Deutsch

### Feature Inc.

David Deutsch's art is all about ways of seeing. Deutsch began with landscapes that aspired to still lifes and paintings of carved-out domes covered with mini portraits. He then shifted to what could be called "drive-bys"—fuzzy images of houses and streets approximating blurred photographs taken from a moving vehicle. Then came surveillance works and photographs of buildings and people as seen from a hovering helicopter. That phase was represented in this show, "Neighbors and Strangers," by Untitled (Nightsun), 2012, an archival ink-jet print of a house and the

people around it that hung in the gallery's front window.

Inside the gallery were eleven acrylicon-linen paintings that rework the drive-by technique. This approach invites chance: he paints on sheet plastic, then presses the painted surface against a prepared canvas that magically absorbs the image. The textures of gestural painting disappear. By flattening his images, Deutsch forces us to focus on the geometry of his compositions.

Traditional perspective, with its van-

ishing point mirrored in the viewer's eyes, is Deutsch's true subject. He communicates this by including figures that look out at us, reminding us that our gaze completes the painting. Sometimes they are characters painted on passing trucks, while others stare at us like prostitutes sitting in windows. Sunset (2012) stood out in this context: two roughly sketched-in houses abut each other, but their inhabitants only have eyes for us. We are the only ones who can see the sunset, because we see what

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the artist saw as he created it. The soft blues and pinks feign tranquility while the crazy paint patterns scream silent static. This was a splendid show by an artist we wish we could see more often.

-Alfred Mac Adam

# 'The Myth of the Given'

### Ashok Jain

In this compelling exhibition of work by Jason Wallengren, Ebenezer Singh, and Graham Gillmore, curated by Singh, the artists approached their subjects—war, subjugation, gay rights, sex, and religion—very differently. All, however, seduced viewers with their use of strong lines and sensuous shapes.

Wallengren's 2012 paintings *Untitled* (*Circle*) and *Untitled* (*Building*) were particularly arresting. In the first, a circle explodes with splashes of orange, pink, gray, and black, ominously spurting out beyond its confines, like a world coming to an end. Small blotches of black dot the white space beyond the circle's borders, looking like slivers of a moon broken in two. In the center sits a mysterious tiny red dot in a gray square, establishing an unsettling area of calm. In *Untitled* (*Building*) a row

of windows seems to fly out of a blurry, shocking-pink mass.

Singh, by contrast, paints a big, gorgeous rooster in *Cock* (2013), described in vibrant blues, reds, and yellows set against a swirling purple background. A striking figure, the bird is both imperious and sexually provocative. And in Singh's *Fat man, little boy* (2012) two enormous blue whales fly into a delicately framed house, symbols, it turns out, of bombs that destroyed houses in Japan during World War II.

The political edge in Gillmore's Foreign Domestic (2012) involves a jumble of blue and red letters repeatedly spelling out foreign and domestic. The letters are so intertwined that they can barely be distinguished from one another. Is there really no difference between foreign and domestic? In the end, are our political perceptions all tangled up in words and stories with no resolution? Perhaps.

-Valerie Gladstone

# XOOOOX

### De Buck

This artist is known for festooning the streets of Berlin, guerrilla-style,

> with his graphic signature, "X0000X," pronounced "zooks." For this strangely edgy exhibition of recent works titled "Everything, Everything!" he appropriated images of female fashion models from magazine layouts. Using stencils, spray paint, and acrylic, the artist rendered these languid beauties in black (with an occasional random splash of white paint) on found wooden doors, planks, and metal sheets. By decolorizing the models and paring down their enticing poses and flowing garments to outlines and shadows, X0000X effectively distills the notion of 21stcentury beauty.

> Transformer VI (Pulsar), 2013, exemplifies his approach to portraiture. It's



X0000X, *Transformer VI (Pulsar)*, 2013, spray paint and acrylic on wood and metal, 65%" x 33" x 4%". De Buck.

a head-and-shoulders depiction of a model casting a sultry glance over her sweater-clad shoulder. The image was painted on a decrepit white door, whose hinges and the vertical lines of its planks artfully carve up the model's face and body.

Jeisa (Loop), 2012, is a larger-thanlife-size portrait of a standing, bejeweled fashion model painted on copper. The bird-like tilt of the model's head is cleverly emphasized by the appearance of a second stenciled image that is identical to the first, but sliced in half vertically. The result is much like what might appear on a photographic contact sheet. It is Warholian in the sense that it embodies the ideas of universal glamour and mass production. Ultimately, these images reminded viewers of the ways in which painting, print, photography, and fantasy differ and overlap—and how the griminess of the street and the slickness and refinement of high fashion complement and even enhance each other.

-Doug McClemont



Graham Gillmore, *Foreign Domestic*, 2012, mixed media on paper, 50" x 38". Ashok Jain.

# Cheryl Kelley

### **Bernarducci Meisel**

Cheryl Kelley employs oil paint on aluminum panels to create a satin-smooth surface that's as sleek and seamless as her chosen motif: close-cropped views of classic cars that have been impeccably restored, so as to appear at once antique and brand new. The artist's own photographs served as the intermediary between her very finished paintings and the cars displayed at automotive shows in Houston, where she grew up. The vehicles sporting California plates reflected her recent move to the West Coast.

Kelley's subjects range from the once ubiquitous '50s Chevrolets to exotic, curvaceous 1938 Delahayes—one yellow, one blue. Several Corvettes looked to be traveling at 60 mph—when parked. Muscle cars like Buick's aptlynamed Roadmaster recall an innocent era when greenhouse gases were unforeseen and extravagant tailfins heralded "the forward look."

It's tempting to see Kelley's subjects as compellingly rendered commodities, blue-chip status symbols whose luster has not faded with time. Her models are costly, but her concerns extend beyond the vintage cars themselves to include the complex world around them. The ostensible subject of her 1940 Packard (2013) is a stately dark sedan, but the way that its gleaming body and sunstruck windows capture a complicated latticework of leaves and branches

created the unexpected sense of the auto as landscape.

In Preacher (2013), the cherry-red fenders and chromeplated bumpers of a prized Dodge Dual-Ghia convertible become distorted funhouse mirrors that reflect at least half-adozen versions of the same scene. Each viewpoint tells a different tale. In one, a man wearing a wide-brimmed hat waves a sheaf of papers. Elsewhere he may be holding a revolver. Reflected in the car's gleaming bumper and hubcap, onlookers' bodies appear severed at the waist. Kelley ultimately shows us how the camera's lens can offer a portal to visionary realms.

-Gerard Haggerty

# Alex Schuchard

### 511 Gallery

This excellent show of 13 recent works demonstrated Alex Schuchard's exceptional talent for depicting moments in nature. His impressionistic images of water, sky, and trees float in space without any context. They are like notes devoid of a musical score or words separated from sentences, yet they are all the more resonant because of their isolation. There is something visually as well as intellectually demanding—not to mention exciting—



Alex Schuchard, *Untitled, No. 10 (from the Surrounding Series)*, 2013, oil and wax on canvas over panel, 24" x 18". 511 Gallery.

about having to provide a context.

Schuchard's palette of mostly blues, pale greens, and grays, conjures up wonderfully untouched worlds, the shapes of which dissolve and blur before our eyes. He gives viewers a hint of beauty in the sensuousness of his palette and the physicality of his brushstrokes, seeking to inspire an emotional response.

An abstraction as well as a remarkable representation, Untitled No. 1 (2013) shows water glistening and rippling as light falls on its surface. There is movement as well as life in the image. We can imagine a breeze causing the small waves and fish swimming in its depths. Schuchard uses greens, grays, and touches of violet in Untitled No. 7 (2013), a blurred image of what might be bushes and flowers against a pale gray sky, seemingly reaching skyward in a tangle of soft growth. Untitled, No. 10 (2013), by contrast, gives little suggestion of a literal subject. Two irregularly shaped green splotches are silhouetted against a pale green background. Most of the canvas is empty. The image is extraordinarily delicate, just a suggestion of the myriad faces of nature.

Ultimately, Schuchard's keen responses to nature inspire our own sensitivity and stimulate our imaginations.

— Valerie Gladstone



Cheryl Kelley, Preacher, 2013, oil on aluminum panel, 20" x 30". Bernarducci Meisel.

# UP NOW

# 'The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913'

## Montclair Art Museum Montclair, New Jersey Through June 16

It might come as a surprise to many that two-thirds of the artists in the legendary 1913 Armory Show were Americans. Over



Manierre Dawson, *Untitled (Wharf Under Mountain)*, 1913, oil on canvas, 18" x 22". Montclair Art Museum.

the last century, the radical contributions of Duchamp, Brancusi, Picasso, and other European modernists have dominated the historical narrative. But this centennial exhibition, organized by MAM's chief curator Gail Stavitsky and guest curator Laurette McCarthy, is the first show to focus on the event's United States contingent. It decisively rebuts the oversimplification that the Armory was the American art world's first real exposure to the European avant-garde. As made clear by the nearly 40 works on view, artists such as Marsden Hartley, Katherine Dreier, John Marin, and Chester Beach, who had all traveled extensively in Europe prior to 1913, were already responding in diverse and sophisticated ways to their European counterparts. Their work offers a fascinating slice of the domestic art world displayed at the Armory Show that has largely been obscured in the retelling of the story.

To be sure, the Armory Show was a seismic event for artists, collectors, and the viewing public. Stuart Davis, one of the youngest Americans included, was still painting conventionally realistic pastoral scenes, such as his watercolor on paper *Romance/The Doctor* (1912), before his encounter with Gauguin, van Gogh, and

Matisse at the Armory. The wall label for this piece tells us that Davis considered the show "the greatest single influence I have experienced in all my work." If that supports the established myth, then Marin's nearby watercolor *St. Paul's, Lower Manhattan (Broadway, St. Paul's Church)*, 1912, is evidence of a more nuanced reality. Marin, who lived in Europe from 1905 to 1910 and then promoted American modernism as part of Alfred Stieglitz's circle in New York, brilliantly captures the bustle of a New World metropolis, using abbreviated, jangly brushstrokes.

Works by two influential members of New York's Ashcan School exemplify the range of bold realism practiced by the group in the years before the Armory Show. Robert Henri contributed the stark, forthright portrait *The Spanish Gypsy* (1912). William Glackens, who worked with fellow artist Arthur B. Davies to select most of the American artwork for the Armory, chose his own monumental interior scene, *Family Group* (1910/11). Its riotous colors and patterns are evocative of Renoir, yet the offhand casualness of the women's postures and their urban-chic clothing have a decidedly American tone.

Other standouts include landscapes painted in heightened, unnatural hues by Arthur B. Carles, E. Ambrose Webster, and Walter Pach, each personally assimilating the high-keyed Fauvist paintings of Matisse that were just as influential to his own countrymen. Pach, who was responsible for gathering all the Parisian submissions to the Armory, also selected Chicago-based artist Manierre Dawson's stunning cubistic painting Untitled (Wharf Under Mountain), 1913, which he added to the show when it traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago. The 1913 exhibition's only fully abstract work by a little-known American artist who had synthesized the lessons of the Europeans and forged his own style, Dawson's painting is a vivid example of how the Americans in fact held their own in the moment, if not in the history books. -Hilarie M. Sheets

# Catherine Opie

# Regen Projects Los Angeles

A leading force in documentary, portrait, and landscape photography, Catherine Opie took viewers on a psychologically charged journey into art history in this astonishing exhibition. Although the show

was billed as simply featuring portraits and landscapes, its seemingly disparate pigment prints, all from 2012, were arranged in deft, perfectly calibrated juxtapositions.

Two images in the gallery's foyer set the mood: dark and haunting, yet strangely peaceful. On the left, an image of a star-filled sky suggested a universe of wonder and possibility. On the right, Lawrence (Black Shirt), an intricately detailed portrait of artist Lawrence Weiner—cigarette held lightly between his fingers, shirt unbuttoned to reveal a bare chest—offered a close encounter with vulnerability and the aging process. This contrast between wide-open space and tightly focused intimacy continued in the main room, where Opie's large photographs of airy, impressionistic landscapes mingled with Old Master-style portraits on dark backgrounds.

While Opie's landscapes hint only vaguely at the living presence of trees or mountains, her portraits of friends and family members—nude, tattooed, or beautifully clothed—are startlingly specific and highly personal. In the ovalshaped Jonathan, a man reading War and Peace sits with his back to viewers. His dark hair and jacket fade into the jetblack background, but his hands—and pages 650 and 651 of his book—are sharply illuminated. Oliver & Mrs. Nibbles portrays the artist's young son gently holding one hand over a vest pocket, where his pet mouse is nestled. Other works are disturbing. In David, a nude man standing in the dark has blood on his hands and penis.



Catherine Opie, *Lawrence (Black Shirt)*, 2012, pigment print, 33" x 25". Regen Projects.

Varied as the images may be, they are united by more than their identical dark frames. In this body of work, Opie has created elegantly seductive pictures that draw viewers into a thought-provoking world of light and darkness, common experience, and personal revelations.

—Suzanne Muchnic

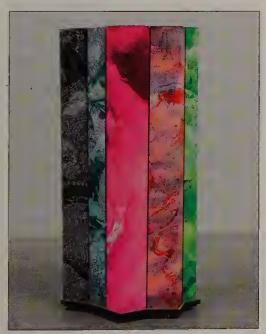
# Richard Deacon

# L.A. Louver

## Venice. California

British sculptor Richard Deacon is known for his innovative use of a wide range of materials, including wood, metal, and clay. This intriguing exhibition, titled "Beware of the Dog," extended his reach even further. Deacon created the 24 works on view—his first experiments with handmade paper—in 2012, during a residency at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. His experience of folding and crumpling large textured sheets and applying color through screenprinting and marbling processes yielded a free-spirited body of work.

The show's centerpiece was a series of sculptures collectively titled "Housing," for which Deacon marbled both sides of individual leaves of paper, folded the splashily colored sheets into columnlike structures, and grouped them in pairs, trios, or clusters. Inspired by low-rent apartment towers in Singapore, these vibrant constructions stand on the floor and rise to heights of approximately three to five feet—but they bear little



Richard Deacon, *Housing 7*, 2012, marbling on folded handmade paper, constructed with magnet button, 43%" x 22%" x 16%". L.A. Louver.

resemblance to the anonymous highrises that form urban skylines around the world. Instead, Deacon took cues from the creatively decorated interiors of Singapore's public housing. He left his buildings roofless so that viewers could peer in through the top to discover a profusion of visual action.

He also produced a series of rumpled wall pieces, named "Konrad Witz" after the 15th-century German painter of people swathed in sumptuous fabric. Snowy white or softly tinted, these pieces inspire thoughts of clouds and weightlessness. Deacon's "Dog Days" series occupies a similar vein, with screenprinted, crosshatched abstract shapes floating freely against backgrounds of white paper. Lighthearted as the work may seem, it's consistent with the artist's inquisitive sensibility and is likely to be echoed in the future.

-Suzanne Muchnic



### Perry Rubenstein Los Angeles

It was easy to be swept away by the gleaming spectacle of vast cities and innovative buildings captured by Iwan Baan's photographs in "The Way We Live," a show of 13 digital C-prints made between 2006 and 2012. But the Dutch photographer's images are not meant merely to romanticize the modern world's built environment. Even if people are absent, or dwarfed by monumental structures, in his works, what most interests Baan is the relationship between human beings and architecture.

When Baan aims his camera at flashy contemporary buildings, he may either transform them into dazzling artworks or use them as frames for human activity. In one particularly striking image, Tolou #1 (2009), an oval-shaped sky is seen looming overhead, shot from inside the circular open courtyard of a traditional Chinese residential complex. Dark and dreary except for the central exposure to blinding natural light, the building appears to be home to hundreds of tenants, who stuff themselves into its tiny, anonymous compartments. Guangzhou #1 (2010) pictures patrons tucked into their space-agey seats at the new Guangzhou Opera House, and House H #1 (2009) is a disorienting image of a man and woman flying, floating, or



Iwan Baan, *House H #1*, 2009, digital C-print, 54" x 36". Perry Rubenstein.

falling through an empty glass house. But in *Bird's Nest #2* (2007), an eerie construction-site shot of the Beijing National Stadium, codesigned by Ai Weiwei and known as the Bird's Nest, workers all but disappear into the piles of coiled hose and bundled pipes that are stacked in the foreground.

Baan's aerial views of Los Angeles and Dubai are thrilling to behold but make the cities appalling to imagine as human habitats. *The City and the Storm*, a 2012 image of post-Sandy Manhattan, is far more pointed. Taken from the air at night, the photograph reveals a city sharply divided between those who have electricity and those who do not. —*Suzanne Muchnic* 

# Terry Adkins

## Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art Evanston, Illinois

Titled "Recital" and curated by Tang Museum director Ian Berry, this retrospective united works made over the last 30 years by artist and musician Terry Adkins. Many of the thoughtful sculptures and videos paid homage to historical figures, often addressing obscure aspects of their lives (such as Jimi Hendrix's military training), or sought to remind viewers of neglected heroes.

Several pieces demonstrated Adkins's use of abstract symbols to retell stories from black history. In *Nutjuitok (Polar Star)*, 2012, stacked glass cubes made

# reviews: national

from salvaged windows offer a sculptural meditation on Arctic explorer Matthew Henson, who may have been the first person to reach the North Pole. The construction glows with a ghostly blue holographic light that evokes the alienation of Henson's frozen environment. The 2004 video *Synapse*—part of "Black Beethoven," a series addressing Beethoven's rumored Moorish ancestry—begins with an image of Joseph Karl Stieler's 1819 painting of Beethoven filling the screen. Brows furrowed, the wild-haired German composer looks just as contemporary audiences imagine him—until Adkins's digital



Terry Adkins, *Nutjuitok (Polar Star)*, 2012, steel, glass, and light, 69" x 50" x 46". Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art.

alterations slowly, almost imperceptibly, turn the painting into a photograph of a black man dressed and posed exactly like Stieler's subject.

Adkins's simultaneous career as a musician has always shaped his practice, influencing his subject matter and making performance an integral part of his art. The sculpture *Off Minor* (2004), which also belongs to the "Black Beethoven" series, resembles a giant music-box cylinder, and it rotates with a terrible clatter every 18 minutes. While alluding to Beethoven's hearing loss, this open-ended piece allows for multiple interpretations, as always with Adkins's work. —*Lauren Weinberg* 

# 'Lifelike'

## New Orleans Museum of Art New Orleans

Curated by Siri Engberg at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and organized in New Orleans by Miranda Lash, "Lifelike" presented nearly 80 installations, paintings, photographs, drawings, and videos made since the 1960s by the likes of Thomas Demand, Ai Weiwei, Chuck Close, and Andy Warhol. Using synthetic materials, exaggerated scale, humor, and illusionistic devices, the works on view experimented with viewers' perceptions of what is real and what is not.

Many artists engaged with Freud's idea of the uncanny, or the sensation of something familiar seeming inexplicably foreign, false, or artificial. Some might have mistaken Yoshihiro Suda's *Weeds* (2005–9), for example, for actual vegetation growing from a crack in the gallery wall. But a closer look revealed a small, trompe l'oeil painting on wood. Jud Nelson's superbly executed white-marble sculpture *Hefty 2-Ply* (1979–81) looked like a bulging plastic trash bag on the floor, seemingly left behind by a cleaning crew.

Other artists explored the relationship between the human body and the modern environment. Ron Mueck's mixed-media sculpture *Crouching Boy in Mirror* (1999–2000) was so convincing here that it actually startled museumgoers, who thought the young figure staring at his own reflection was alive. And Evan Penny's larger-than-life (Old) No One-in Particular # 6, Series 2 (2005), a hyper-realist silicone bust with actual human hair, depicts an aging man whose baggy skin and sunken eyes suggest years of



Jonathan Seliger, *Heartland*, 2010, enamel on bronze, 103" x 29" x 29". New Orleans Museum of Art.

wear and struggle. Other contributions recast utilitarian items that receive little notice in our daily lives in striking, monumental proportions. Jonathan Seliger's nearly nine-foot-tall enamel-on-bronze milk carton *Heartland* (2010), to name one, is painted and lettered in exquisite detail, complete with a June 13, 2010, expiration date.

Ultimately, the works in this show (which opens at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas, on June 23) transform bits of the mundane into objects that provoke reflection about life in an increasingly technological and automated world.

—John R. Kemp

# Radcliffe Bailey

### Bridgette Mayer Philadelphia

Initially celebrated for his "medicine cabinet" sculptures of African spiritual objects, Radcliffe Bailey has since expanded his practice to include painting and installation. "Notes," his first show with this gallery, featured powerful works in a wide range of mediums and demonstrated his ability to conjure, and then subvert, an atmosphere of history and tradition.

The show opened with a selection of small, framed gouache paintings on pages of sheet music from the series "Notes from Tervuren," which was partially inspired by the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. In these delicate works, carvedwood Congolese figures explore wild and exotic nautical settings, wryly alluding to the journeys of African slaves to the New World. Bailey's use of sheet music rather than paper adds another layer of reference to the complex history of colonial exchange—in this case, the strong influence of African music on music in the Americas.

In the rear gallery, wall-hung vitrine sculptures, again addressing slavery, evoked the format of ethnographic museums. In *Currency* (2011), a photograph of a carved African figure is displayed in a glass case like an artifact but enlarged to the scale of a human child. A leather strap decorated with brass bells is draped over the frame—simultaneously suggesting a historical object and a dog collar waiting to be filled.

Bailey's African American muses—the scientist, the musician, the blacksmith—

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Radcliffe Bailey, *Notes from Tervuren*, 2012, gouache, collage, and ink on sheet music, 12%" x 9%". Bridgette Mayer.

are always present in his work, and the trickster, one of his favorites, was given the gallery's vault space as his stage. In front of a found vintage photograph of an elegant 19th-century magician in a suit and top hat, an expert three-dimensional cardboard facsimile of the hat turned upside down sat on a pedestal, revealing its inner lining of rabbit fur and feathers. For a moment, the history of African folklore seemed eerily alive in the gallery.

-Edith Newhall

# Mie Olise

# Barbara Davis Houston

Continuing New York- and Copenhagen-based artist Mie Olise's investigation into abandoned spaces and structures, "Crystal Bites of Dust" featured ten mostly large-scale canvases, all painted in acrylic with the addition of water from the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn. Inspired by Robert Smithson's 1967 article for *Artforum*, in which he documented the ruins along New Jersey's Hackensack River, Olise's monumental works illustrate and immortalize the decaying scenery of that polluted New York City waterway.

In her work, Olise has explored sites as disparate as a ghost town in the Arctic Circle and a crumbling Berlin amusement park. The dreamy canvases here possessed all the hallmarks of her painting, uniting flat swatches of background

pigment with controlled textured spatters and vivid yet gestural figuration. In *Gowanus Canoe* (2012), a coral-colored lone canoe slumped against a dock suggests a romantic Venetian gondola. The collapsing structure of *Concrete Plant* (2012) holds all the exotic allure of a medieval tower, and the Renaissance Revival–style residence in *No Whole-food House* (2012) could be the set for an old-fashioned debutante ball, with a bell-shaped chandelier suspended from above like a lifeline.

Beyond its symbolic presence in these works, the canal water acts as paint thinner. By diluting the artist's pigments, it enables viewers to see Olise's widebristled brushstrokes, which mimic the planks of the ruined houses, bridges, docks, and boats she depicts. In these exquisite canvases, the faded grandeur



Mie Olise, *No Wholefood House*, 2012, acrylic and water from the Gowanus Canal, 96" x 96". Barbara Davis.

of old architecture and a touch of the uncanny take over what is in reality a patch of grimy waterfront.

-Catherine D. Anspon

# Helen Frankenthaler

# Meyerovich

## San Francisco

This intimate show presented five works made by Helen Frankenthaler in the 1980s. While her early Color Field paintings from the '50s feature thin washes of poured paint, banishing the brushstroke in favor of the stain, these large works on paper play with the texture of layered pigments as well as juxtapositions of color.

Working with handmade paper and soft, dusky inks, Frankenthaler scored,

pocked, and mottled the surfaces of the prints, occasionally building up simple lines and circles with wax. But unlike the aggressive process of her action-hero predecessor Jackson Pollock, Franken-thaler's gestures tended to reinforce the meditative mood of her pictures. In the 1980 woodcut *Came*o, peachy blotches and striations hum over a quiet blue backdrop, but it's the blue that keeps drawing the eye back in. Next to those sparse disturbances on the surface, the unmarked expanses of color somehow feel the most full.

The show's standout piece was the cast-copper bas-relief Bird of Paradise (1986-89), which leaned against a wall. Towering over the room at just over eight feet tall, the work heightened the tension between form and fluidity, strategy and release, that lurks in Frankenthaler's paintings and prints. Like a giant sculptural landscape, the work is covered in thick strokes of warm, rosy copper, pushed and molded like wax or clay. Frankenthaler made every inch, from the soft allover crosshatchings to the piece of pipe lodged in the lower left corner, luscious and tactile, treating metal as a substance as pliant and expressive as paint. Although the selection here was almost too small for a show, it's a credit to Frankenthaler that her rich surfaces reward even the longest looks.

—Lamar Anderson



Helen Frankenthaler, *Guadalupe*, 1989, relief on handmade paper, 69" x 45". Meyerovich.

# reviews: international

# 'Light Show'

## Hayward

### London

This exhibition offered an entertaining survey of contemporary artists who have explored the properties and possibilities of artificial light, from Dan Flavin's pioneering 1960s work in colored fluorescent tubes to the strobe-lighted optical illusion of Olafur Eliasson's *Model for a timeless garden* (2011). Demonstrating how artists have used relatively simple, consumerfriendly bulbs to sometimes dazzling effect, "Light Show" documented a rich and ever-shifting vein of production.

The first piece to greet viewers was Leo Villareal's Cylinder II (2012), a glittering tower of light and mass. It set an ethereal, even glamorous tone that found its darker counterpart in Jenny Holzer's MONUMENT (2008)—a stern, imposing totem of LED tickers that relay the texts of declassified United States government files from the Iraq War. Other works matched light with mirrors to create a trompe l'oeil paradox. In Reality Show (2010), Iván Navarro built a cubicle of one-way mirrors in which viewers saw an infinite series of reflections that, puzzlingly, did not include their own image. They could not see out, but people standing outside the box could see in, subtly alluding to police-state interrogations in Navarro's native Chile.

Anthony McCall's You and I, Horizontal (2005) used video projectors and mist to give light seemingly material form. In London artist Conrad Shawcross's Slow Arc Inside a Cube IV (2009), a metal cage in the center of the room contained a rotating light that cast looming shadows on the walls, demonstrating how light can be used to subvert our sense of scale.



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Chromosaturation*, 1965-2013, fluorescent lights with red, blue, and green filters, dimensions variable. Hayward.

Also featuring works by James Turrell, Doug Wheeler, and Carlos Cruz-Diez, "Light Show" might have included others, such as Robert Irwin and Julio Le Parc, but it nonetheless provided an exquisitely curated trip through one of contemporary art's most flexible mediums.

—Roger Atwood

# 'Becoming Piçasso: Paris 1901'

### Courtauld

### London

Throughout his long working life, Picasso created for himself a virtually unassailable reputation for precocity. There were numerous breakthrough years; so many, indeed, that his diversity is almost as big a topic as his overall stature. Even in 1901, when he was 19, he produced—sometimes at the rate of three paintings a day—works that pushed every button within range, all destined for his debut exhibition with dealer Ambroise Vollard. In this concentrated, illuminating show, curator Barnaby Wright demonstrated the virtue of clear focus and exemplary choices. The 18 pictures from 1901, drawn from collections from around the world, were the necessary ones.

In the summer of that year, having just arrived in Paris from Madrid, Picasso took on van Gogh, Cézanne, and Toulouse-Lautrec, moving from froufrou Hispanesque to low-key Nabis. His aim, it seems, was to adopt vivacious styles as a matter of urgency. His friend, the poet Casagemas, had shot himself that February, and Picasso elected himself as chief mourner in his paintings. (He couldn't be there at the funeral.) Evocation (The Bur-

ial of Casagemas) transfigures the suicide into an El Greco-like altarpiece composition, with women perched on the clouds above. They are naked save for black stockings, already foreshadowing the figures of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, which Picasso would create six years later.

"Becoming Picasso" celebrated the unstoppability of the artist. In



Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait (Yo)*, 1901, oil on board, 21½" x 12½". Courtauld.

Self-Portrait (Yo), an oil on board, the artist's blazing eyes emerge from a dark background, sizing up the challenges and the options. In 1902–3, Picasso would tone things down and step into his Blue Period, risking a drear combination of Puvis de Chavannes and Edward Burne-Jones. But he soon got over that as well. As this exhibition proved, his devouring spirit and his habitual remakes were there right from the start. — William Feaver

# Armando Romero

# Inception

### Paris .

For this subversive exhibition, titled "Les Faceties d'Armando Romero" (Armando Romero's Facetiousness), the 49-year-old Mexican artist appropriated iconic works by the likes of Goya, Botero, and Bosch and reinterpreted them with impertinent modifications and additions. His surprising desecrations—proof of great skill—included graffiti, comicbook heroes, and cartoon characters, as he injected high-brow art-historical masterpieces with low-brow contemporary references.

All the works on view were both funny and uncomfortable in their irreverence. In a suite of anachronistic paintings, Romero integrated such characters

# reviews: international



Armando Romero, Regents, 2006, oil on canvas, 45%" x 53". Inception.

as Tweety Bird, Sylvester the Cat, Batman, Robin, and the Smurfs into compositions where they don't belong. The additions seem to be glued on top, like children's stickers or decals. The title figures in *Futuristic Architects* (2008), for example, who appear to have been displaced from an Italian fresco, dream of a bright-pink Disneyland castle while the Goodyear blimp flies high overhead.

In another series, "Vandalism and Other Irreverences," Romero deftly defiles his own reproductions of masterworks. His doodles of spaceships, robots, King Kong, and a dinosaur in La Ciudad (2012) transform an interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 1559 Netherlandish Proverbs into an apocalyptic nightmare. And in Regents (2006), Romero scribbled jagged white lines over the stern figures in his copy of Frans Hals's 1664 Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse at Haarlem—his marks evoking both chalk on a blackboard and the work of Cy Twombly. Romero is a bad-boy iconoclast who unapologetically topples artistic preconceptions and encourages us to take a different look at works that we have traditionally canonized. -Laurie Hurwitz

# Mohamed Bourouissa

Galerie Kamel Mennour Paris

Mohamed Bourouissa, an Algerian-born French photographer and video artist, first gained attention for his photographs depicting urban youths in the rough suburbs of Paris. In that series, dead-end streets and anonymous hotel lobbies became settings for elaborately staged scenes addressing issues of immigration and displacement. This multimedia exhibition, titled "All-in," was anchored by a video of the same name that had the look and feel of a decadent music video and dealt with luxury and excess.

Conceived as a sitespecific work for the Paris Mint in 2012, *ALL-IN* was filmed throughout its elegant Neoclassical headquarters. Set to music by French rapper Booba—with lyrics that

embrace the materialistic ideals of rap culture—the video recounts the process of making a medal emblazoned with the rapper's face. Sleek images of the coin's production culminate in a shower of the glittering objects on the debauched remnants of a decadent party. In this film, every man's dream of moneyed luxury comes true, as the mint immortalizes Booba's image on a limited-edition coin—but in the end, Bourouissa suggests that merging the man with the money might have a more destructive cost.

Stock 1 (2013), a monumental photograph à la Gursky, depicting money piled up at a minting factory, has a sleek, cold geometry. That sterile image was counteracted by *Agnès* (2013), an intimate photograph of a young woman hunched over a table, carefully counting her coins.



Mohamed Bourouissa, *Agnès*, 2013, Lambda print laminated on aluminum, 25" x 20". Galerie Kamel Mennour.

Nearby, the large mobile *Un poids deux mesures* (Double standards), 2013, balanced a clean photograph of a minting machine with a brushy painting of a potato that wryly refers to the French slang word for "money." Here again, an impersonal image of commerce contrasted with a messier image that served to remind us of the harsh reality of money—that it's a necessary part of human life.

—Laurie Hurwitz

# The Central American Biennial of Visual Art 8

Panama City Museum of Contemporary Art Panama City, Panama

The Central American Biennial of Visual Art, known by its acronym BAVIC, was founded in 2002 as a survey of the region's contemporary art, with an army of curators culling work from six countries. For its eighth edition, held in Panama City, 35 of the 36 artists showed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, which occupies a converted Masonic temple inside the formerly U.S.—controlled Canal Zone. It was a fitting spot for a roster of artists whose work often deals with immigration and cultural border-crossing.

Riffing on the cross-cultural theme, Luis Cornejo's classically proportioned oil portraits of sassy urban women evoked U.S. hip-hop culture as filtered into his native El Salvador. The five-man Guatemalan group known as La Torana, whose works are signed individually and exhibited collectively, delved into issues of dislocation and violence using traditional materials and a dark sense of humor to create some of the event's strongest work. Among Torana member Marlov Barrios's wooden constructions was a sleek maquette of a Mayan pyramid topped with a replica of the Chrysler Building—a visually harmonious yet jarring combination of two soaring monuments to power, one representing a fallen cultural order, the other the triumph of American capitalism. In the chilling but strangely beautiful installation Derrocamiento (Piara), 2012, Torana member Josué Romero projected moving images, including an army propaganda film, onto a plaster bust of CIA-installed 1950s dictator Carlos Castillo Armas.

# reviews: international



Marlov Barrios, untitled sculpture from the "Turbo (Avistamientos)" series, 2012, carved wood, 39%" x 19%" x 15%".

Panama City Museum of Contemporary Art.

Other worthy contributions hinted at environmental disaster, such as Panama artist Darién Montañez's hypnotic video of a debris-filled river. Costa Rican artist John Juric's Soldados (2012) features rows of tiny, empty medicine bottles, like a down-market homage to Damien Hirst, interspersed with toy soldiers that symbolize white blood cells fighting infection. Costa Rica's peaceful tradition aside, it was startling to see a Central American artwork in which soldiers represented something other than violence or oppression, recurring themes in the region's history and its art. -Roger Atwood

# Djordje Ozbolt

### Hauser & Wirth Zurich

Entering this exuberant exhibition of recent paintings and sculptures by London-based, Belgrade-born artist Djordje
Ozbolt was like washing up on a surrealistic tropical beach populated by magical hybrid beasts and dancing African fetish figures. Titled "Who Say Jah No Dread," this phantasmagoric mixture of multicultural iconography and the artist's personal travel experiences was presented in a riot of color laced with humor.

Anchoring the show was a dazzling sculptural work of polystyrene that shared its title with the exhibition. Coated

in glass-reinforced plastic, this 2013 construction presented a stacked-up menagerie of jungle beasts in Rasta colors: a gray elephant carries a red cheetah, on whose back stands a yellow kudu supporting a green chimpanzee with a dove perched on its extended figure. Also on view was a series of seven playful landscape paintings. The transformer (2013) portrays a monkey dressed in tiger stripes, seated atop a beast with a tiger's head, whose body is part giraffe, part zebra. In Dance me till the end of love (2013), animated African sculptures—one an iconic Ashanti fertility doll—appear to waltz to Leonard Cohen's 1984 pop hit.

The mood was more somber in an adjacent room that featured a suite of seven pseudo-portraits from 2012. In these paintings, collectively titled "Gentlemen of Ngongo," Ozbolt juxtaposes African tribal-mask heads with aristocratic clothing recalling Elizabethan finery, always



Djordje Ozbolt, *Clouds that pierce the illusion* that tomorrow will be as yesterday, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 88%" x 92%". Hauser & Wirth.

against a neutral gray background. Facing the portraits was a trio of mass-produced African tribal figures, which Ozbolt purchased in local markets and then decorated. His wry touches of contemporary consumerism, such as a Mercedes-Benz hood ornament and an elaborate blond wig, transformed the traditional objects into an energizing collision of cultures.

-Mary Krienke

# Ilya Gaponov

### Erarta Zurich

In Russian artist Ilya Gaponov's still-life paintings, meticulously depicted animal and human forms are pushed to the top of the canvas together with a piece of fruit—

or the unexpected contemporary flourish of a Cuisinart blender or a box of McDonald's french fries. The remaining space is a black void crossed with descending white threads. Titled "Fressen," a German word meaning "to devour" or "to eat like an animal," this exhibition included eight large paintings, each approximately six feet square, and nine smaller paintings depicting abstract body parts, always hovering above that same black void.

Gaponov's darkly atmospheric paintings are said to represent his disillusionment with the undiscerning appetites of consumer culture. Among their twinned and tangled subjects are the heads of horses or zebras juxtaposed with a skeletal rib cage, an arched human torso, a Starbucks cup, and a flayed carcass, split down the center like a butterfly. The dividing line between the upper and lower portions of these canvases evokes a number of symbolic references, among them a table of depravity and a sacrificial altar bearing evidence of our indulgent society. The most graphic example of the latter is Undiscerning Appetites No. 7 (2012), in which back-to-back animal skulls on the left of the frame are balanced by two cheeseburgers on the right.

Though these works clearly draw on the tradition of 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings, they have none of their predecessors' warm domesticity. Rendered in Kuzbass varnish—a deep, earth-toned lacquer derived from coal tar—they seem to pay homage to the Siberian coal-mining region where Gaponov was born. In their symbolic representations of economic and social values, and their apparent contemplation of life and death, these paintings can be said to plumb the depths of the Russian soul. —Mary Krienke



Ilya Gaponov, *Undiscerning Appetites No. 7*, 2012, oil on canvas, 71" x 71". Erarta.

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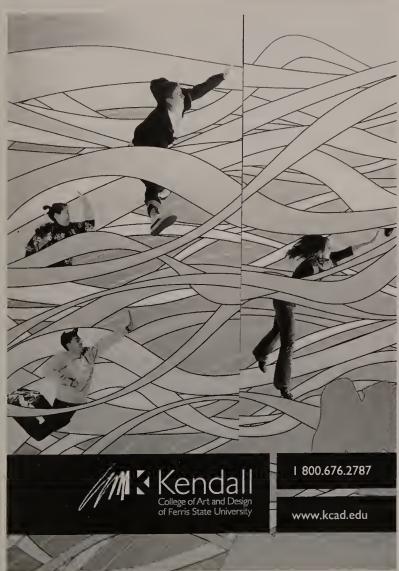
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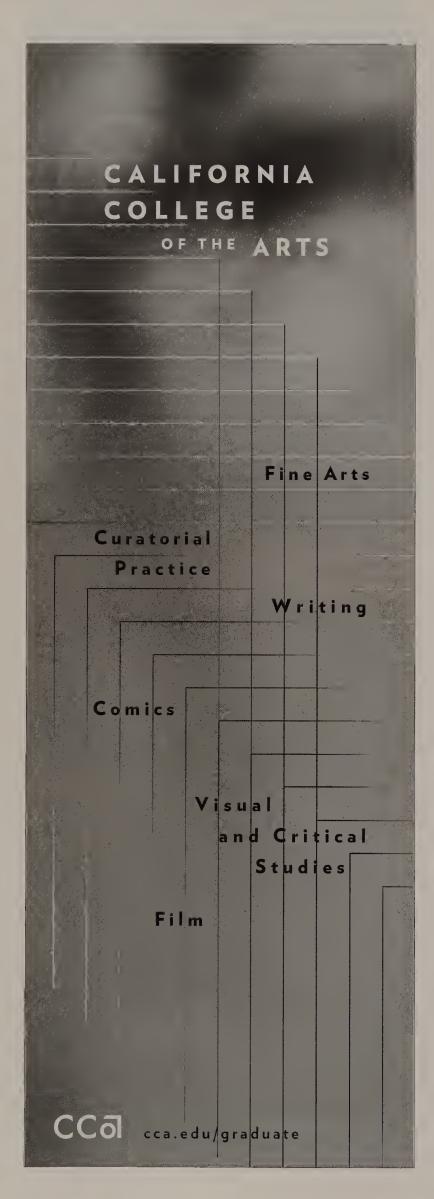
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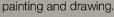
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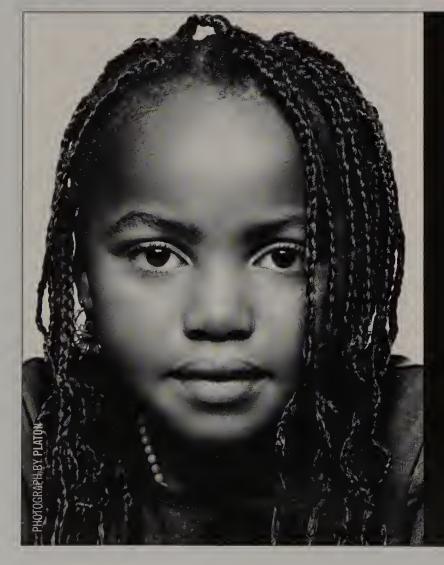
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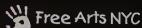
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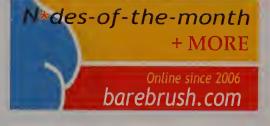
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# CRITIC'S PICK

# **ROYCE WEATHERLY**



Royce Weatherly's 11-by-14-inch painting Untitled (Bupkis), 2012, was purchased by artist Richard Prince.

oyce Weatherly lets his paintings—and oil paint itself—reveal the workings of time. Many of his painstakingly composed, hyperrealist still lifes take decades to complete. He acknowledges and even welcomes the medium's natural pigment changes and the decay of the objects he depicts. *Untitled (Black Walnuts #2)*, 2012, for example, shows walnuts rotting in their shells, and the blue rim of a coffee cup in another work might turn yellower with age. "I want to see if I make a piece," the artist says, "that over time, as it yellows, it will become more gray and more like a shadow."

Having worked on and off for years as an installer and conservationist for the Whitney Museum and other institutions, Weatherly, 56, knows a lot about how art materials can age. Born in North Carolina, he got his B.A. in political science and art from Wake Forest University, and then received an M.F.A. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In the 1980s and early '90s, he was a preparator at Barbara Gladstone Gallery, had a solo show at the then brand-new Gavin Brown's enterprise, and soon found his work in a handful of private European collections. But then he disappeared from the art scene—or at least from galleries. He moved to Maplewood, New Jersey, where he still lives with his wife and two daughters, working in carpentry and art installation.

After a 12-year hiatus, Weatherly made a triumphant return last spring with an exhibition at Bushwick's Bogart Salon, a space run by his longtime friend, the artist and gallerist Peter Hopkins. The show's three Morandi-like still lifes of what Weatherly calls "dumb objects"—potatoes, rocks, walnuts, coffee cups—sold out, for \$12,000 apiece. According to Hopkins,



Royce Weatherly.

one buyer was Richard Prince, Weatherly's friend from the Gladstone years. Prince purchased *Untitled (Bupkis)*, a small 2012 oil on linen depicting spilled coffee in a Greek-deli cup and the cellophane wrapping from a cigarette pack against a white field. Weatherly's new series of still lifes—one featuring lard and butter—was recently included in an exhibition that opened in April at Hopkins's latest Bushwick venture, ArtHelix, where the artist is represented.

When selecting the everyday items that will become the subjects of his meticulous focus, Weatherly says he often asks himself, "'What's the minimum you can do to make a painting?' A flower is too loaded, but a potato is good." He then sets things up in his basement studio where seashells, coral, and cellophane cluster in careful piles. He paints slowly, over the course of months if not years, building up thin layers of paint to capture the arrangement and any weathering—of subject matter or medium—that occurs with time.

"Sometimes an object looks better as it gets older," Weatherly says. "Everything around it will get richer and deeper. It's all about slowing down and looking." —*Carly Berwick* 

Carly Berwick is a contributing editor of ARTnews.

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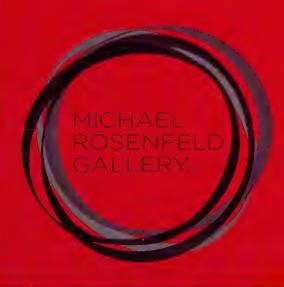
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